

St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Address: FARMFIELD DRIVE, BEECHWOOD, PRENTON, MERSEYSIDE, CH43 7TE

Unique reference number (URN): 105070

Inspection report: 6 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders make inclusion central to their decision-making. They identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. This begins in the early years. Leaders use information from education, health and care plans effectively to set and review individual targets. Leaders support pupils who are known to social care and maintain regular contact with the relevant agencies. They link families to community support, including help for those experiencing financial hardship. The school's nurture hub provides tailored support for pupils with communication, social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils who attend are better able to engage in school life as a result.

Speech, language and communication needs are the most common in the school. Leaders work with health professionals and share assessment reports with parents and carers at each stage. Leaders have trained staff to deliver speech and language programmes in school. Pupils generally make progress with their communication as a result.

Pupil premium funding supports a range of extra help for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics as a result. However, this funding plan does not include specific actions to address the difficulties some pupils face, and have faced for some time, in writing. Leaders have not set out a targeted response to this.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have designed a programme that helps pupils understand how to be healthy, safe and responsible. Pupils learn about important values, such as respect and democracy, and about treating everyone fairly. Relationships, sex and health education is woven throughout in an age-appropriate way. External visitors bring local issues to life, making it relevant to pupils' lives. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and in their relationships. As a result, they make more informed choices about their health and wellbeing.

The school's Catholic character shapes pupils' personal development and sense of community. Collective worship takes place daily. Pupils explore their faith and its connections to the wider world. They learn about other world religions and take part in dedicated faith and cultural events across the year. A local football club delivers sessions on equality and respect. This deepens pupils' understanding of difference. Pupils show a clear sense of belonging.

Leaders recognise and nurture pupils' talents. Some have developed their chess skills to represent the county. Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Clubs, trips and performances are free of charge. Leaders track participation carefully, so no pupil misses out. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the same opportunities as their peers. Trips to London and beyond broaden pupils' horizons. For many, this is the first time they have left the local area. Pupils hold leadership roles in charitable work, peer support and faith leadership. They develop confidence and a sense of responsibility through carrying out these roles.

Staff know their pupils well and support them effectively. Pupils who need additional help are better able to manage their emotions and engage in school life. Every classroom has a calm space for pupils who need time to regulate. Pupils say they feel safe and know which adults they can speak to.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Too few pupils secure the important basic knowledge they need in the early stages of reading. By the end of Year 1, too few pupils have the knowledge they need to read well. Writing is a persistent area of weakness. Over time, pupils do not secure the knowledge they need to become proficient writers by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.

Teachers do not address errors in punctuation, spelling, handwriting and mathematics. Pupils continue to make the same mistakes. Where the curriculum is not matched to pupils' different stages of development, knowledge does not build as it should. As a result, gaps accumulate over time.

At the end of key stage 2, outcomes are broadly in line with national averages in reading and mathematics. Pupils are typically well prepared for secondary school. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well by the end of their time at the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Attendance remains below the national average. Persistent absence is high. Too many pupils miss too much school. This affects some groups of pupils more than others, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When pupils are absent, they miss teaching and fall further behind their peers. Leaders work to support families who face barriers to regular attendance. While leaders have taken steps to improve attendance, the steps taken so far have not had the impact that leaders intend.

Pupils are polite, kind and welcoming. They follow the school's behaviour expectations, which cover conduct, responsibility, respect and care for the environment. Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. The school is calm and orderly, which helps pupils focus on their learning. Staff apply the behaviour approach fairly. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive. They feel confident sharing any worries with adults in school. Leaders make sure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Bullying is rare. Leaders deal with any incidents effectively. Pupils play well together at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Leaders plan carefully to make sure that pupils with SEND can join in fully.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teaching of the curriculum varies. While the curriculum sets out what pupils need to learn in a logical order for mixed-age classes, learning tasks do not always reflect the intended

learning. They do not always build on what pupils already know. Pupils in mixed-age classes sometimes complete the same work, regardless of their age or stage of development. In written work, teachers do not help pupils to correct errors in punctuation, spelling or handwriting. As a result, some pupils do not secure this knowledge or progress as well as they should. Leaders have not identified the full extent of these weaknesses.

Staff receive training and coaching to improve the teaching of phonics. In some cases, staff follow the phonics programme effectively and pupils learn sounds in the right order. Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to practise reading using books matched to their phonics knowledge. However, this is not reflected in phonics outcomes.

Where teaching is more effective, teachers help pupils to recall prior learning and apply it to new topics. For example, in geography, teachers use local examples of Liverpool to help pupils understand human and physical features of the cityscape. Teachers build vocabulary for each subject and help pupils explain complex ideas. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities engage with the curriculum alongside their peers. Outcomes in some areas, however, remain below where they should be.

Early years

Needs attention 

The school teaches children in the Nursery and Reception Years together. At times, staff do not interact with children purposefully to extend their thinking and communication. The activities and spaces available do not always help children explore and learn at the right level. As a result, children are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they should be.

Leaders make sure that children's ability to talk and communicate is a priority. A specialist works with the school regularly to support children's speech and language. Adults prioritise learning to read from the start. However, children do not always have opportunities to practise what they have learned during their day-to-day activities.

The provision for 2-year-olds is well led. Adults are well trained and know each child and their needs well. Children make good progress, even when they arrive with very little language. Staff use language, songs and storytelling purposefully to help children communicate and develop. Children settle quickly, feel safe and grow in confidence. Staff provide effective individualised support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes children with an education, health and care plan.

Parents and carers speak warmly about the school. They value the approachable and supportive staff and the care their children receive, particularly in the provision for 2-year-olds.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders bring knowledge of the school and its community. They are managing a great deal of simultaneous change. They have not identified some important weaknesses. Leaders are beginning to focus on the right areas for improvement, but in many areas it is too early to see the impact.

Governors are dedicated to the school and its community. Many bring knowledge from a range of professional backgrounds. This helps them to carry out their health, safety and safeguarding responsibilities well. However, governors do not question leaders closely about how well pupils are doing. When pupils are not achieving as well as they should, governors do not challenge this effectively. Leaders are working to fill all positions on the governing board, including parent governors, to further strengthen the board.

Staff are well supported. Leaders are mindful of their wellbeing and workload. Staff benefit from training and development opportunities that help them do their jobs well. Behaviour has improved since the introduction of the current approach. Parents and carers speak positively about the impact of leaders recently. The school is a more settled place as a result.

Leaders engage well with parents, carers and the wider community. Parents describe the school as a warm and supportive place. They value the relationships staff build with families and feel confident that their children are well cared for. Leaders have built meaningful links with local organisations, giving pupils experiences that extend well beyond the school gates.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a small school where every pupil is welcome. Its Catholic character is visible throughout school life and shapes the open-hearted community that pupils, families and staff experience. Pupils have warm relationships with staff and with one another. They move around school with confidence and engage positively with visitors.

Too few pupils achieve as well as they could, particularly in writing and phonics. While leaders have taken meaningful action in some areas, progress is uneven. Children in the early years are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they should be. Leaders do not address gaps in important basic knowledge quickly enough.

Pupils' attendance is below national averages. Leaders work hard to support families who face the greatest barriers to regular attendance. Too many pupils still miss too much school. Pupils feel safe and report feeling happy at school. Bullying is rare. Leaders deal with any incidents effectively.

The youngest children benefit from a warm and welcoming start to school. Pupils enjoy their learning and benefit from enrichment opportunities that broaden their understanding of the wider world. Many experience visits and events that take them well beyond their local area for the first time. Leaders make sure that no pupil misses out on enrichment because of their circumstances. Pupils take on meaningful leadership roles and speak warmly about the responsibilities they hold. This helps pupils to develop leadership skills and resilience and to be well prepared for life beyond school.

Staff prioritise pupils learning to read from the start in the youngest classes. A small number of pupils are beginning to read with greater accuracy as a result of recent improvements to the reading programme.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is designed to meet the different needs of pupils in mixed-age classes so that knowledge builds progressively between year groups.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers accurately identify and address errors in pupils' work so that gaps in knowledge do not persist, ensure that phonics teaching is accurate and effective across the school so that the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard moves closer to national averages, and ensure that the teaching of writing is strengthened across the school so that pupils make better progress and more go on to achieve greater depth.
 - Leaders should make sure that their attendance strategies have a clear and measurable impact so that overall attendance improves and persistent absence reduces.
 - Leaders should prioritise providing staff in the early years with professional development to improve the frequency and quality of interactions that adults have with children.
 - Governors should strengthen their ability to hold leaders more stringently to account for the progress pupils make in school, ensuring that their challenge supports improvement where it is most needed.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Michael Brown.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese and local authority. The lead inspector also spoke with a group of governors that included the vice chair of the governing body.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Its last section 48 inspection was 25 March 2026.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery, a breakfast club and an after-school club.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Julie Shire

Lead inspector:

Dianne Holcroft, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Tony McCoy, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

111

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

120

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

67.50%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.70%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

36.94%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	53%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	50%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	58%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	87%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	90%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	60%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	68%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	58%	67%	-9 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	66%	-29 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	87%	80%	7 pp
2024/25 (final)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	92%	80%	12 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	78%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	78%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	77%	-40 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	81%	-1 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	38%	79%	-42 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	10.0%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.0%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	30.0%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	42.9%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.3%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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