

Horwich Parish CofE Primary School

Address: Church Street, Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire, BL6 6AA

Unique reference number (URN): 105233

Inspection report: 31 March 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise improving pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. This work is having a positive effect. Pupils attain in line with national averages in published test results. Disadvantaged pupils do well and in some subjects they achieve better than similar pupils nationally.

Pupils make progress through the curriculum. This is especially the case in English and mathematics. Younger pupils learn important skills early. They become confident with phonics, spelling and letter formation. They also develop a secure understanding of number and use this well to solve problems. Pupils can explain their thinking and talk about what they are learning in English and mathematics. In some other subjects, pupils' understanding is less well developed.

Most pupils are ready for the next stage of their education. Leaders continue to focus on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers so that all pupils are supported to succeed.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders focus on improving attendance. Most pupils attend regularly and overall attendance is in line with the national average. Some disadvantaged pupils and some with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend as often as they should. This means that these pupils sometimes miss out on essential learning and access to other activities. Leaders' recent work to address this has had a positive impact.

Leaders have created a caring, nurturing environment where pupils feel happy. Staff have clear expectations and model kindness and respect, which pupils reflect in their behaviour. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are keen to learn, listen carefully and try their best. In classrooms, pupils take pride in their learning. They are kind to one another and enjoy working together. Around the school, pupils are polite and thoughtful. They hold doors open and happily say please and thank you. This creates a warm, welcoming environment where everyone feels included. Bullying and unkind behaviour are not accepted and staff address any concerns quickly and sensitively. When pupils need extra support, staff respond with patience and care, seeking help from specialists when needed to support pupils and their families.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a secure understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They check how well curriculum plans are implemented and use this information to identify what needs to improve. Leaders take action to strengthen teaching so pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares them for their next steps.

The curriculum is suitably ambitious. Leaders have designed subjects so that learning builds over time. This is especially important in mixed-age classes, where content is carefully

sequenced to support progression. Leaders ensure that teachers have the subject knowledge needed to teach the curriculum clearly. They provide guidance so teachers can explain content well, choose appropriate activities and address misconceptions.

Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised. Teachers support pupils to secure this important knowledge and provide help where pupils need to catch up. The curriculum and teaching develop pupils' language, vocabulary and knowledge of numbers. Teachers help pupils to make links to prior learning. For example, in Year 2 mathematics, pupils revisit earlier learning about measures before moving on to new content.

Leaders and staff know pupils well and adapt teaching for those who face barriers to their learning. This is more effective in English and mathematics than it is in other subjects.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders' focus on high-quality spoken language has a positive impact on children's learning. Staff are thoughtful in their interactions with children. They listen carefully and extend children's vocabulary through play and planned activities. The curriculum is well designed to ensure that children learn all that they should. Leaders promote close links with parents and carers, which support children's learning at school and at home.

Reading is given high priority. From the start of Reception, children learn the sounds and letters that they need to start to learn to read and write. Staff consider children's starting points and adapt activities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They use their training to ensure that children develop correct posture and pencil grip when practising writing letters and numbers. Children practise what they have learned through play. Leaders' recent work to improve the indoor and outdoor spaces means that activities are purposeful and engaging. Adventurous experiences in the forest area build physical skills and create meaningful opportunities for talk. Children feel secure and well cared for. There is an emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development. Staff gently encourage independence and support sensible risk-taking. As a result, children develop confidence, resilience and curiosity. They leave the early years well prepared for the expectations of Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders act quickly to spot pupils who need extra help. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff use what they have learned in training to notice when pupils are finding learning difficult. When pupils need extra emotional or social support, leaders make sure that this is put in place. This includes for pupils who are known to social care. Staff work closely with pupils' families and other professionals to make sure that pupils are well supported. They share information and keep in regular contact when this is needed.

Leaders use additional funding well to support pupils' learning and wider experiences. For example, they use it to help pupils take part in trips and clubs, including residential visits, so that disadvantaged pupils have the same opportunities as others. Leaders have also focused on improving academic achievement for pupils who receive extra funding. This work is having a positive impact. In 2025, these pupils did better than similar pupils nationally in

writing and mathematics. Support is not quite as effective in some other subjects. Some pupils with SEND do not consistently receive the same level of help beyond English and mathematics

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school well. They understand what is working and what needs to improve. Leaders identify priorities clearly and take timely actions. These are improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Leaders check the impact of their work and adapt plans where needed. Leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality professional learning. This programme is carefully planned. It builds staff's expertise and supports consistent teaching. Leaders make sure training links closely to school priorities.

Leaders take staff workload and wellbeing into account when making decisions. Staff say they feel valued and supported. Leaders consider the demands placed on staff and make changes where possible. This helps staff to manage their work and maintain a positive balance.

Leaders engage well with parents and carers. Regular communication enables families to play an active role in their children's learning and wellbeing. This partnership has a positive effect on pupils.

Governors meet their statutory duties and understand the school's strengths and priorities. They manage resources well and hold leaders to account. Governors provide challenge alongside support. Leaders and governors make decisions in the best interests of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those with additional needs and those known to social care. Occasionally, leaders do not use information about some pupils' progress as fully as they could to check how well the school is meeting their needs. As a result, leaders' evaluations are not as precise as they should be to make sure these pupils are supported consistently well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Through the school's personal development offer, pupils grow into thoughtful and caring individuals. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and know why this matters. Staff guide pupils in building positive relationships and learning how to resolve disagreements calmly and fairly. This helps pupils to develop confidence and kindness in how they treat others.

Pupils learn about their own heritage, including the history of Horwich, and explore cultures from around the world. This broadens their understanding of life beyond their local community and they learn to respect different beliefs. Learning about significant events, such as the Holocaust, helps pupils understand how history has shaped the world today. Music plays a valued part in school life and all pupils learn a brass instrument in Year 4. This builds confidence and gives pupils a shared experience they enjoy. The school's values of love, respect and forgiveness are at the heart of daily life. Staff help pupils understand how these values guide their behaviour and choices.

Fundamental British values are brought to life through practical experiences. For example, pupils who take part in a mock trial club develop an understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Work with other schools helps pupils explore issues such as racism and equality in a supportive way.

Through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education curriculums, pupils learn how to care for their physical and mental health and how to stay safe, including online. Enterprise projects help pupils to understand money, when they set out their fundraising ideas as business plans. A well-planned 'bucket list' sets out memorable experiences, including visits to museums, the theatre and a Year 6 residential trip to Scotland. These experiences enrich pupils' learning and personal growth.

Occasionally, leaders do not ensure that some pupils catch up on any missed PSHE as quickly as they should.

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

Pupils are proud to belong to Horwich Parish CofE Primary and speak warmly about their school. Each morning, staff greet pupils and their families with kindness and care. Staff know pupils well and take time to check in with them. This helps pupils feel settled and ready to learn. Pupils are encouraged to 'let their light shine' and to get involved in all that the school offers. This creates a sense of belonging.

Relationships throughout the school are positive and respectful. Pupils get on well with each other and trust the adults who work with them. Pupils say that they feel happy and safe in school. They are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries. Unkind behaviour is not accepted and staff deal with any issues quickly and fairly. Most pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time.

In lessons, pupils are keen to learn. They listen carefully to teachers and enjoy sharing ideas with one another. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils who face challenges to their learning or wellbeing are supported with care and encouragement so that they can take part in school life. Most pupils achieve well. They leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education and speak positively about what lies ahead for them.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility. They develop leadership skills through roles such as eco-warrior, member of the junior leadership team or friendship ambassador. Older pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils. For example, digital leaders help pupils in key stage 1 to understand basic algorithms. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs, including fencing, dodgeball, flower arranging, chess and cooking. Sport is celebrated and pupils are proud to represent the school at hockey, basketball, football and tag rugby.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their actions to improve attendance for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND),

- ensuring that staff support pupils who return after absence to address gaps in learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff receive the guidance that they need to make effective adaptations for pupils with SEND in subjects beyond English and mathematics.
 - Leaders should use detailed analysis of school performance to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision and act on priorities to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from all that the school offers to achieve and thrive.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Susan Baines.

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, deputy headteacher and other leaders. They spoke with governors, including the chair, and representatives of the diocese and the local authority.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection was held in May 2023.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Debbie Mills

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Trish Merritt, Ofsted Inspector

Karen Morris, 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 31 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

317

Close to 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

420

Above 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)

18.61%

Close to 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

1.58%

Below 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

11.99%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to 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	64%	61%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	58%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	60%	Close to average

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	75%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	75%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	84%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	71%	Close to average

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	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	88%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	73%	Close to average

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	44%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	75%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	70%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	75%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	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	66%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	56%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average

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	66%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	90%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average

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	44%	68%	-24 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	67%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 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	75%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	80%	-5 pp
2022/23 (final)	83%	78%	5 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	66%	78%	-12 pp
2024/25 (revised)	80%	78%	2 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	78%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	77%	-11 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	66%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	90%	81%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 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 (2 term)	3.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

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 (2 term)	7.2%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.5%	16.2%	Below

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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