

St Richard's Roman Catholic Primary School Atherton

Address: Flapper Fold Lane, Atherton, Manchester, M46 0HA

Unique reference number (URN): 106498

Inspection report: 28 April 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

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils learn to respect the views and beliefs of others, including those from different backgrounds and faiths. For example, they discuss different beliefs and traditions. This broadens their appreciation of the world beyond their own community. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, including democracy. They vote for school representatives and understand the importance of rules. This prepares pupils to play an active part in their school community.

Pupils take on a range of leadership roles linked to the school's values, including supporting younger pupils and contributing to the wider community. They are proud of these responsibilities and develop a growing sense of service to others. They have opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences. This helps pupils to develop curiosity about the world and the people within it.

Leaders have designed a coherent personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They learn about healthy relationships and different types of families. Pupils benefit from relationships and health education that is appropriate to their age and stage of learning. Staff know pupils well and provide tailored pastoral support when pupils need it. Pupils know they can speak to a member of staff if they have concerns.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including clubs and visits. They take part in a local sports partnership with nearby schools. This gives pupils the chance to compete, build teamwork and make new friendships with pupils from other schools. Trips, including visits to a local zoo and other places of interest, help pupils to broaden their understanding of the wider world. Older pupils look forward to residential visits, which help them to develop resilience and independence. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils take an active part in school life.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage of education as they could be. Some pupils at the early stages of reading have gaps in their reading knowledge. This includes some pupils who did not pass the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2025.

In 2025, outcomes in national tests at the end of Year 6 were lower than in previous years. Despite many pupils reaching the expected standard in writing, some make spelling and grammar errors in their written work across subjects.

Some disadvantaged pupils have gaps in spelling, grammar and mathematics that are not closing as quickly as they should. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make suitable progress from their starting points. However, others,

particularly those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, do not make the progress from their starting points that they could. Despite this variability, some pupils demonstrate detailed knowledge in some subjects. Many pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

In some classes, pupils do not meet the school's high expectations for behaviour. This is because some staff do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. However, where staff apply these expectations effectively, pupils follow routines well. Where they do not, pupils become distracted and lose focus on their learning. Staff do not make the adaptations that some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) need to manage their feelings and behaviour. This includes pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils sometimes struggle to meet leaders' expectations. Despite this, staff deal swiftly with any incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour.

Pupils' attendance is well above national averages. Leaders track absence carefully and understand why pupils are not in school. They work closely with families and the local authority to address concerns early. This has had a particularly positive impact on reducing persistent absence. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND attend at above national levels. Leaders make sure that pupils who find it harder to attend regularly receive timely support to help them to come to school more often.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is inconsistent across year groups and subjects. Teachers do not consistently choose activities that help pupils to learn new knowledge and remember it. In some lessons, teachers do not routinely check that pupils have learned what they have been taught. This means that they sometimes move on to new content too quickly, before the learning has stuck.

In some classes, teachers make helpful adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. However, in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, staff are not clear on the important knowledge that the most vulnerable pupils need to know. The activities that staff design do not consistently help these pupils to learn and remember what they need to know.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum across subjects. When it is taught well, such as in some science lessons, pupils acquire detailed knowledge over time. Some older pupils receive appropriate support that helps them to read accurately and fluently. However, leaders' actions to improve the consistency of teaching are at an early stage.

Early years

Needs attention 

In the early years, some children do not gain secure knowledge of the sounds that they need to read words accurately. Adults prioritise learning to read from the start. They follow a structured phonics programme, which sets out the sounds that children should learn.

However, some adults do not say these sounds correctly. This means that some children practise phonics incorrectly. When this happens, it sometimes goes unnoticed and prevents some children from learning to read accurately. Consequently, some children are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they could be.

Leaders have identified the knowledge that children will learn in the early years. Despite this, some adults are unclear about what children should learn. Some adults do not routinely ask questions that help children to think deeply. As a result, some children do not consistently get the help they need to develop their knowledge and ideas. The interactions between adults and children are warm and caring.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers when children join the school. This allows children to settle into routines quickly. Adults take time to get to know each child so that children feel happy, safe and settled in the early years. They make checks to find out what children know and can do.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders do not put in place support that is closely matched to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. For example, the needs of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan are not met well because staff do not consistently follow the strategies set out in pupils' EHC plans. In the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, staff are unclear about what pupils should be learning. As a result, these pupils do not get the help that they need.

Leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Over time, this has helped some pupils to catch up in writing and mathematics. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of this spending on individual pupils with sufficient precision. As a result, some disadvantaged pupils do not consistently receive the support they need to access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Leaders have established a clear approach to identifying pupils' needs. They work with a range of external agencies and access specialist support promptly. Their checks on the effectiveness of this support, though, lack the precision needed to make a meaningful difference to pupils' outcomes.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders do not check whether their work is making a positive difference for pupils with sufficient rigour. For example, staff receive training to improve their teaching but leaders do not consistently ensure that this training addresses the specific improvements needed. Leaders have not ensured that the pupils who need the most support to learn and achieve well get the focused help they need.

Governors meet their statutory duties such as for safeguarding pupils. However, they do not have a precise understanding of how well some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are supported to be successful in school. Governors are unable to explain how the school ensures that additional funding is making a difference for individual disadvantaged pupils. Governors do not routinely hold leaders to account for how well these pupils are doing. As a

result, some disadvantaged pupils are not receiving the support they need to close gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Leaders have been highly effective in improving attendance. They think carefully about the workload and wellbeing of staff as they lead the school's improvement work. Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders know their community well and understand the challenges that pupils and their families may face. Leaders have identified the right priorities and are taking more focused action to bring about the improvements that pupils need. They know that their actions must have a greater impact, particularly for the pupils who need the most help.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to St Richard's Catholic Primary School. Some, however, are not as well prepared for their next stage of education as they could be. In some classes, teaching does not consistently help pupils to connect new learning to what they already know. This means that gaps in some pupils' knowledge do not close as quickly as they could. Some children in the early years are not developing the secure phonics knowledge they need. As a result, some are not as ready for Year 1 as they could be.

Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not consistently receive the support they need. For example, in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, some pupils do not receive the help that would make the most difference to their learning. This means that some of the most vulnerable pupils do not make the progress that they could.

Staff know pupils well and build caring relationships with them. The school's values of faith, kindness and respect run through daily life. Most pupils enjoy learning and feel a real sense of belonging. They generally behave well and treat each other with care. However, in some lessons, pupils do not consistently meet the school's expectations and some lose focus. They feel safe at school. Bullying is rare. Any incidents are dealt with effectively.

Pupils attend school regularly. The number of pupils who are absent regularly has reduced over time. Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities, including visits to places of interest. These help pupils to broaden their experiences and take pride in their school community. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils can take full advantage of these opportunities. Pupils generally develop the confidence they need for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Governors should make sure that they understand how well pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, learn and achieve so that they can hold leaders to account effectively for improving outcomes for all pupils.
- Leaders should make sure that their quality assurance of the curriculum and teaching is more sharply focused on the impact of teaching on pupils, including for disadvantaged

pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that teaching improves consistently across the school.

- Leaders should make sure that they identify pupils' barriers to learning more precisely so that effective support is quickly put in place and helps pupils to achieve well.
 - Leaders should make sure that teachers consistently identify and rectify errors and gaps in pupils' knowledge of spelling, grammar and mathematics so that pupils build secure foundational knowledge in these subjects.
 - Leaders should make sure that staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and provide effective support for pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour so that all pupils meet the school's high expectations throughout the school day.
 - Leaders should make sure that activities in the early years provision support children to learn well and that staff engage children in high-quality interactions to develop and extend children's knowledge and prepare them for learning in Year 1.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Andrew Bowyer.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke to representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors engaged with pupils throughout the inspection. They also spoke to some parents and carers. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys and Ofsted Parent View.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. It received a section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in February 2019.

Headteacher: Dawn Nulty

Lead inspector:

Mark Hazzard, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sarah Price, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Barraclough, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

184

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

210

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)

37.50%

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

2.72%

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

23.91%

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	71%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	54%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	77%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	60%	Above

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	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	54%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

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	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	90%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	71%	Above

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	84%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	89%	73%	Above

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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	31%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	69%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	44%	Above

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	57%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	31%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	69%	62%	Close to average
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	73%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	62%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	58%	Above

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	81%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	69%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	59%	Above

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	57%	68%	-11 pp
2024/25 (final)	31%	69%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	69%	67%	1 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	66%	9 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	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25 (final)	31%	81%	-50 pp
2023/24 (final)	69%	80%	-11 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	73%	78%	-5 pp
2024/25 (final)	62%	78%	-17 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	78%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	77%	-2 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	81%	80%	1 pp
2024/25 (final)	69%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	88%	79%	8 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	79%	8 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)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.5%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.5%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	11.0%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	18.2%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.9%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright