

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Leigh

Address: Mather Lane, Leigh, WN7 2PW

Unique reference number (URN): 106501

Inspection report: 24 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 

Pupils make sound progress from their starting points. Staff in the early years quickly determine children's strengths and areas for development. They use this information to plan learning opportunities that promote children's learning and development successfully. The vast majority of published outcomes show that pupils achieve well. This includes disadvantaged pupils. The exception for this in the 2025 data is writing. However, current pupils' achievement in writing shows a much more positive picture. Over time, pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need to be confident and competent writers. Staff make sure pupils have the essential knowledge and skills that they need across the curriculum to set them up well for future learning. For example, where needed, staff support pupils with letter and number formation so that their work becomes more accurate. Typically, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next part of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils attend school regularly. They know that learning is important. Leaders keep detailed information about attendance. This helps them to intervene quickly where needed. The support that staff give pupils and families where required, has a positive impact on pupils' attendance. Leaders take the time to understand the challenges when pupils do not attend regularly enough. The actions that are put in place support families to make positive changes.

Pupils learn in a calm and productive environment. They are clear about what staff expect of their behaviour and conduct, as well as their attitudes to learning. Pupils are typically respectful, polite and considerate. They know this is what staff expect from them. Pupils follow instructions and think about the impact of their actions on others. Bullying is rare. Staff model warm and supportive relationships. They help pupils to recognise unsafe or dangerous behaviour, including online. This helps pupils to feel secure and able to ask for help if they need it. If pupils struggle to meet the school's high expectations, staff provide sensitive and well-considered support to help pupils to experience success.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders hold an accurate view of what the curriculum looks like and how it is taught. There have been many recent improvements. These have been in response to leaders' evaluation of pupils' learning across the range of subjects on offer. Typically, pupils learn well. This is because the curriculum generally supports pupils to build on what they already know. Leaders take time to check that the curriculum helps pupils to secure new knowledge well. Leaders make swift changes where required to improve pupils' learning.

Staff receive helpful training that supports them to have secure subject knowledge. Consequently, they explain new learning clearly to pupils. Staff use the information that they have about pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities to recognise how to help pupils to learn with success. For example, staff break learning down into manageable steps and give pupils the chance to revisit previous learning to build their confidence.

Starting in the early years, staff make sure that children build the important knowledge and skills that they need to set them up well for further learning. For example, staff give carefully considered support to pupils who struggle to read. This helps pupils to develop into confident and fluent readers and prepares them well for their next stage of learning.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. This is because staff take the time to know children as individuals. Staff build supportive relationships with children and their families. This helps children to build confidence. Parents and carers receive helpful information about useful ways to support learning at home. For example, staff model the phonics programme as part of the focus on early reading. Reading is high priority. Children become familiar with a range of books, stories and rhymes. This helps them to enjoy reading and apply their phonics knowledge well. For example, children's writing in the classroom shows how they write with increasing accuracy.

Staff plan a curriculum that balances children's interests with important learning. Learning builds on what children already know. This helps children to deepen their understanding. Staff receive the specific training that they need to understand how young children learn. This enables them to focus on the essential aspects of children's development, such as their communication skills. Consequently, most children leave the early years well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders want all pupils to feel included in the St Joseph's school family. Staff skilfully identify any special educational needs and/or disabilities that pupils may have. They use this information carefully to plan learning opportunities and support that help pupils to learn well. Staff quickly get to know about any possible barriers to learning or wellbeing that pupils may have. They make regular checks on the progress that pupils make through the curriculum. In addition to this, they make sure that all pupils can benefit from the school's wider offer. For example, staff find out what pupils' talents and interests are and make activities accessible to all.

Staff receive the training that they need to understand any factors that may make learning difficult for pupils. They work closely with parents and carers, and other professionals to shape the learning offer and check the progress that pupils make.

Leaders spend pupil premium funding appropriately. They carefully monitor the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. This enables leaders to make swift changes to the support that pupils receive should it not have the necessary impact on pupils' learning or wellbeing.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's current effectiveness. They care deeply about pupils' learning and wellbeing. They make regular checks on the quality of education, as well as how pupils are kept safe. Leaders have secure plans in place for the development of the school. They carefully balance the pace of progress with making sure

that developments are sustainable. Leaders take care to prioritise those changes that make the biggest impact on pupils' learning. They make regular checks on the curriculum and teaching. Occasionally, their checks do not give them precise enough information to help them make timely improvements.

Leaders hold staff to account appropriately and support them to meet the high expectations in place. Staff receive a well-considered programme of training. This helps them to understand leaders' intentions for how the curriculum should be taught. Staff who are at the early stages of their career receive useful support and care to develop into an effective teacher. Leaders give staff the time that they need to embed new ideas. Staff typically feel well supported. They appreciate leaders' consideration for their wellbeing. For example, staff generally feel like their voice is important to leaders.

Leaders and governors make decisions in the best interests of pupils. Governors check that leaders' actions impact the most vulnerable pupils. For example, governors make sure that the pupil premium funding is spent appropriately.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils are proud to belong to the St Joseph's school family. They value learning and feel well cared for. Pupils appreciate the time that staff take to show interest in their hobbies and make them feel special as individuals. Pupils rise to the expectations that staff have of them to take responsibility. For example, pupils enjoy the 'seeds and gardeners' programme where older pupils act as role models for children who are new to the school. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and recognise the positive impact of their actions on others. This helps to make the school a caring and friendly place to learn.

Pupils learn to celebrate and appreciate difference. They take an active interest in those who may be different to them. They ask insightful questions that reflect their curiosity, while being respectful. Pupils say that being different would not be a barrier to being accepted at St Joseph's. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding about fundamental British values. They recognise how these values, alongside the school values, help them to make the right choices and think about others.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe physically and online. Through the curriculum they learn about the support available to them as well as what to do if something worries them. They gain the essential knowledge that they need to identify unsafe situations. For example, pupils know that healthy relationships centre on trust.

Pupils receive highly effective pastoral support. Leaders do all that they can to support pupils and families through any difficulties they face. This support is wide ranging and has a positive impact on pupils' engagement and involvement in school life. Parents and carers appreciate the support that they receive through periods of difficulty. They recognise that leaders consider how to provide support that makes the most difference to pupils' learning or wellbeing.

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

Pupils at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School learn in a happy and safe environment. Pupils attend regularly and they value learning. They appreciate the warm and nurturing relationships that exist across the school. Pupils are friendly, kind and caring towards each other. They recognise that the school family represents how they should take care of others and listen to different points of view. Pupils do not worry about bullying. They know how to identify and report it. Pupils have every faith in staff to act quickly if it did happen. This helps them to feel safe.

Pupils enjoy learning. Staff have high expectations and so pupils learn to give their best efforts. Pupils who may struggle with this receive well-placed support to rise to what is expected. Pupils develop a 'can do' attitude. This sets them up well for the next stage of their education. Pupils achieve well. In the vast majority of subjects, this is reflected in their published results.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, receive the help that they need to learn well and take part in the school's wider offer. Staff make sure that pupils receive the support that they need to be able to follow their interests. For example, leaders make sure that pupils with SEND can represent the school at sports fixtures.

Pupils develop a rich understanding of the world. Leaders plan opportunities that enhance pupils' understanding of how different people live. For example, visitors from different cultures share real life experiences with pupils. Pupils learn to ask thoughtful questions and develop into curious learners. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure pupils' writing skills develop further so that pupils can consistently achieve well, including at the end of key stage 2.
 - Leaders should make sure that all aspects of their monitoring give them the most useful and precise information about curriculum and teaching to further increase consistency across the school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Philip Heaton.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and pastoral manager during the inspection. They also spoke to other staff about what it is like to work at the school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character.

The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

The headteacher joined the school in January 2025.

Headteacher : Liam Richardson

Lead inspector:

Jane Dennis, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Kathryn Nichol, Ofsted Inspector

Christopher Metcalfe, 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 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

213

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

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)

20.66%

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

5.16%

Above 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

23.94%

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

Below 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	63%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	74%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	85%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	75%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	67%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	90%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	94%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	94%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	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	41%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	33%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
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	76%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	63%	60%	Close to average

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	47%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	65%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	83%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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	41%	68%	-26 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	33%	69%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
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	76%	80%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	63%	78%	-16 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	47%	78%	-31 pp
2024/25 (revised)	33%	78%	-45 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 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	65%	80%	-15 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	5.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.1%	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)	12.0%	13.3%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	13.3%	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.

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