

Blackfell Primary School

Address: Knoulberry, Blackfell, Washington, Tyne and Wear, NE37 1HA

Unique reference number (URN): 108833

Inspection report: 3 February 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 

By the end of key stage 2, pupils achieve broadly in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well as a result of the school's work to remove barriers to their achievement. In the Year 4 multiplication check, pupils achieve significantly higher than the national average.

Across the school, leaders have prioritised the development of handwriting, spelling and grammar. As a result, the quality of pupils' work in books and pupils' spelling have improved. However, a small number of pupils in key stage 1 have some gaps in their phonics knowledge. At times, teaching does not address this swiftly enough to enable these pupils to catch up quickly to progress as well as they could.

Pupils generally develop secure knowledge and are ready for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Overall attendance is in line with the national average. This is due to the effective systems and detailed analysis that leaders have in place. Leaders are committed to reducing pupils' absence. Leaders and staff work closely with parents and pupils to help them understand why being in school every day matters. Pupils who have struggled to attend school have received bespoke support. This helps pupils to build their confidence and come to school more regularly. Leaders' actions are having a positive impact on improving attendance and reducing persistent absence, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Typically, pupils behave well. Leaders have recently simplified and strengthened the school behaviour policy so that it ensures a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment for all. As a result, pupils are clearer about what is expected of them. They understand the 3 school rules: be safe, be ready, be respectful. This simple approach has helped staff to support pupils to improve behaviour. This has been especially helpful for some pupils with SEND. Pupils are consistently polite and respectful. They say bullying is rare and if it happens staff deal with it straight away. Within lessons, pupils are mostly focused and enjoy their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is appropriate and has been sequenced well so that pupils learn key knowledge and skills over time. Leaders have identified where the curriculum needs to be adapted for the changing context of the school. Staff are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach.

The curriculum is typically taught well and, as a result, pupils remember what they have recently learned. Pupils enjoy lessons and particularly express a love of science, where they value the opportunity to complete a range of experiments. Leaders have chosen books to inspire pupils when writing. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how much they enjoy reading.

The curriculum and how it is taught meet the needs of younger pupils in mixed-year groups, but it does not always meet the needs of older pupils as effectively. While this supports early learning, it means that older pupils have fewer opportunities to extend their learning. Further refinement of the curriculum is underway to ensure pupils in mixed-year groups receive an appropriate level of challenge.

Assessment is used through the year to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge over time. However, at times, teaching does not identify where pupils have not understood their learning. Misconceptions are therefore not addressed quickly enough. While teaching ensures there are regular opportunities to revisit prior learning and rehearse key skills, a handful of older pupils do not recall times tables or other basic number facts securely. This hinders them from solving problems efficiently.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is prioritised by leaders, who are ambitious for all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are clear processes in place to help identify the needs of pupils with SEND. This has enabled staff to be more effective at meeting varied needs. Staff make appropriate adaptations that help children with SEND to learn the curriculum. Training for staff ensures that they have the expertise needed to support pupils effectively. Leaders review the quality and effectiveness of support and adapt it as needed. Where required, leaders make timely and appropriate referrals to external agencies.

The school engages effectively with parents and carers, who value the support pupils receive and the positive impact this has on pupils' attitudes to school. Staff, parents, carers and children are all involved in setting precise targets to ensure pupils make progress. Although support for pupils helps them to close some gaps in their knowledge, at times these are only small steps.

Leaders make astute decisions on how the pupil premium funding is allocated to ensure pupils who are disadvantaged are supported well to make progress from their different starting points. Systems and structures are in place to help them monitor the effectiveness of the support provided.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have strong oversight of the school. They make decisions that act in the best interests of pupils. Leaders have ambitious plans to improve the school to better meet the changing context of the school's and pupils' needs. Leaders have clearly identified appropriate priorities relating to demographic changes and the creation of mixed-year groups. They understand the challenges and actions required to ensure the curriculum fits the school's context so that all pupils progress well.

Staff benefit from appropriate professional development. For example, professional learning has helped staff to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In addition, leaders ensure teachers strengthen their subject knowledge and support their development as subject leaders. Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued. They recognise and appreciate that leaders are mindful of workload and wellbeing.

The new leadership team has established a new vision for the school. The team's vision recognises the importance of engaging with parents and carers. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the new leadership.

The well-established governing body plays an important role in the school's direction. They engage well with staff and parents and they know the school well. Leaders welcome the challenge and advice they receive from governors and external support.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils' wellbeing is a priority for leaders and staff at the school. Leaders have a successful approach to promoting positive mental health through the curriculum, including 'healthy heads' support and parent workshops. Promotion of a good diet and exercise further teaches pupils how to have a healthy mind and body.

The personal development programme is appropriately sequenced and designed to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe online and are aware of the risks of social media.

Leaders understand the importance of widening pupils' experiences through the provision of a range of visits and after-school clubs. They have begun to track participation in clubs and actively promote attendance for more vulnerable pupils and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders have a suitable understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum enrichment programme.

There are some opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. Through these, pupils have helped to develop a welcoming entrance where parents can access the clothes swap shop. Furthermore, pupils are enjoying the process of planning a reading library.

School values are promoted by leaders and staff and are evident around the school. Pupils exemplify these throughout the day. Pupils know and understand the importance of respect, tolerance and equality. These are reinforced effectively through the curriculum and assemblies. Pupils articulate how this understanding helps them in their daily life and how important it is for a safe and happy community, in and out of school.

Needs attention

Early years

Needs attention 

The activities provided for pupils in Nursery and Reception sometimes limit their learning. While the environment is creative and inviting, children are not provided with enough opportunities to use their newly acquired reading, writing and mathematical knowledge independently.

Staff have sequenced the curriculum appropriately. However, the words that children should learn are not clearly identified to ensure they extend their vocabulary. In addition, staff's

interactions typically do not support children well to acquire and embed new vocabulary securely. Leaders have recently taken action to improve the early years provision, but further work is required to ensure children are given appropriate challenge across the environment.

Children benefit from high-quality teacher-led phonics sessions. Children who have struggled to keep up are provided with timely support. In mathematics, pupils learn to recognise quantities of numbers. Staff help pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills, and the majority of older children can form letters and numbers correctly.

Leaders understand the importance of early identification of speech and language delays. They ensure that pupils receive tailored support. Referrals to external agencies are made in a timely manner. The school forges positive relationships with parents and carers. Pupils are happy and are respectful of adults and each other. They are keen to share their learning.

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

Pupils are warmly welcomed into Blackfell Primary School each morning by staff who care deeply for them as individuals. Staff model the newly reintroduced values of relationships, resilience, resourcefulness, risk-taking and reflection. Pupils who exemplify these are praised in the weekly celebration assembly. The culture of respect is embedded throughout the school. This is fully lived out by staff and pupils alike. For example, pupils hold doors open for visitors without prompting and with a smile on their face. Pupils learn the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. They have a clear understanding of why equality and the rule of law are important for life in modern Britain.

Pupils generally achieve well by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils secure the knowledge that they need in phonics to equip them with the skills they need to read and write as they progress through school. Children in the early years usually build secure foundations in their learning and development. However, children in Reception do not have sufficient opportunities to apply what they have learned.

The school is inclusive and pupils feel valued despite their different starting points, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders know children well. They ensure barriers that pupils may have to learning are identified, and support is put into place to help them to progress.

Typically, pupils behave well. They are confident that on the rare occasions there is bullying, staff deal with it quickly and it stops immediately. Most pupils attend school regularly. Pupils' wellbeing is a priority for the school, for example pupils are taught how they can develop a healthy mind.

Pupils relish the opportunities to visit places of interest around them and say this enhances their understanding of the curriculum.

Next steps

- Leaders should further develop the curriculum to ensure that it is specifically tailored to the changing context and needs of the pupils in school.
 - Leaders should further strengthen the use of assessment effectively within lessons to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge promptly so these can be addressed without delay.
 - Leaders should ensure that the early years curriculum and teaching extend and embed children's reading, writing and mathematical development.
 - Leaders should further support staff to strengthen the quality of their interactions with children in the early years so that these consistently build on children's knowledge and extend their vocabulary and learning.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Angela Star.

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.

Information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2025. The school now has some mixed-year classes.

Headteacher: Danny Patterson

Lead inspector:

Nicky White, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Deb Murphy, Ofsted Inspector

John Lucas, His Majesty's 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 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

147

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

246

Close to 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)

35.29%

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

1.36%

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

19.05%

Above 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	69%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	80%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
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	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	95%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	83%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	90%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	87%	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	76%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	85%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	63%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	75%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	55%	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	81%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	100%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	78%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	74%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	63%	68%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	75%	69%	6 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	67%	-5 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	66%	-12 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	81%	80%	2 pp
2024/25 (revised)	100%	81%	19 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	82%	78%	4 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	78%	78%	0 pp
2024/25 (revised)	88%	78%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	78%	-15 pp
2022/23 (final)	82%	77%	4 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	74%	80%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	88%	81%	7 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	79%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	73%	79%	-6 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)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	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 (2 term)	11.0%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	17.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	14.8%	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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