

St Andrew's CofE VC Primary School

Address: Brunts Lane, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0LY

Unique reference number (URN): 109595

Inspection report: 10 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Well-trained staff monitor attendance carefully. They track attendance regularly, which helps them to identify pupils or groups of pupils whose attendance is at risk of falling below expectations. This allows leaders to step in quickly to provide support and, where necessary, challenge parents and carers when attendance needs to improve. Leaders have worked with individual families to raise attendance when this action has been required. This approach is effective. Pupils attend school well, both overall and in specific groups. Over time, attendance has been above national averages, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below national figures.

The school has worked hard to refine its approach to managing behaviour. Leaders have adopted a therapeutic approach that focuses on helping staff understand pupils' behaviour and support pupils to make better choices when their behaviour falls below expectations. This approach is generally working well. Most staff maintain high expectations and manage behaviour clearly and consistently. As a result, pupils understand what is expected and strive to meet these expectations. Leaders take swift and appropriate action where any concerns about bullying or discrimination arise. Classrooms are typically calm and conducive to learning. Leaders recognise that further work is needed with some members of the school community, including parents, to ensure they fully understand and support the school's chosen approach.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children make a positive start to their schooling in early years. Leaders have designed a well-thought-out curriculum with a clear focus on early language development.

Routines and expectations help children settle into school quickly. Activities are well planned and support children to acquire key knowledge that they can build on as they move through the school. For example, children learn the concept of 'one more' and 'one less' in mathematics through engaging and effective activities that actively involve them in learning. Reading is also a clear priority. It is taught effectively and means children learn their early letter sounds well and begin to read fluently. This approach helps children to learn and remember important knowledge successfully.

Staff know the children well. Where children have specific additional needs, staff work closely with parents and carers and, where appropriate, external agencies to understand these needs thoroughly. When necessary, they adapt provision in the setting to meet these needs effectively.

Planned activities enable children to practise and consolidate their learning in the environment. Interactions between adults and children are typically positive and help to extend children's learning. Leaders recognise that some staff need further training to make these interactions even more purposeful.

Overall, children in early years achieve well and are suitably prepared for Year 1 and beyond.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has a caring and supportive ethos. Leaders work proactively with external agencies to secure the support that pupils need. Combined with well-trained staff, this approach helps the school maintain an inclusive environment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified accurately and are generally supported well in their learning. Leaders work with teachers to plan effectively for these pupils and to remove barriers to learning. As a result, pupils with SEND usually learn successfully alongside their peers. When pupils require more tailored support, leaders ensure this is provided. This includes those who attend the school's SEND provision. Trained adults in this provision support pupils to develop their speech and language skills in a targeted way. When appropriate, these pupils are successfully included in mainstream classes across the school. Leaders keep a close check on pupils' learning and progress, adjusting the support in place as required.

The school uses its pupil premium funding in a targeted and effective way. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to take a full role in school life. For example, disadvantaged pupils are specifically encouraged to take on responsibilities across the school. They are well represented as school prefects and carry out these and other roles with pride. Alternative provision is used where appropriate and in pupils' best interests.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is well established and meets statutory requirements. Teaching supports pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils also learn what healthy relationships look like and how to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. When leaders identify specific needs, they invite external visitors to teach pupils about important issues in the community.

The school is proud of its church school ethos. Leaders describe how this supports them to create an environment they value and uphold. At the same time, they recognise the importance of teaching pupils about different cultures and beliefs in the local community and beyond. For example, pupils participate in a faith tour of Bedford, visiting a range of different places of worship. This helps pupils to develop respect for others and understand why people may hold different beliefs or behave differently.

Older pupils play an active role in school life. The school offers a range of additional responsibilities that allow pupils to develop leadership skills. Prefects represent the school proudly at events, while playground buddies organise games and support younger pupils to ensure playtime is positive for everyone. Disadvantaged pupils are well represented in these roles.

The broad range of clubs on offer provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Clubs enable pupils to extend their skills in sports, the arts and music. More disadvantaged pupils are now part of the school choir after leaders recognised that

these pupils were previously under-represented and took steps to encourage their participation. The sign language club is another example of how the school promotes inclusivity through its wider offer.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Published outcomes are available for only the phonics screening check in Year 1 and the multiplication check in Year 4. This is because the school has yet to have a group of pupils sit national tests in Year 6. This means that the published outcomes provide information only about some pupils' achievement in some parts of the curriculum. Pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check have been below national averages for all of the past 3 years. Likewise, pupils' outcomes in the Year 4 multiplication tables check were significantly below average in the latest academic year, although they were in line with national averages in the 2 years before that.

Some pupils have gaps in key knowledge. For example, some lack fluency and accuracy in their writing and in the way they present their work. Where this is the case, pupils are not catching up quickly enough. These gaps act as a barrier to their achievement across the curriculum.

Across the wider curriculum, pupils' knowledge is developing. Work in pupils' books shows that they are generally making suitable progress through the planned curriculum. Pupils speak positively about the exciting activities and learning they experience. Most pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, can recall key knowledge from recent lessons. Pupils demonstrate stronger knowledge in science compared with some other curriculum subjects.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is significant variation in the quality of teaching across the school. Where teaching is strongest, staff present new learning clearly and effectively. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully through purposeful questioning. Pupils complete tasks that help them secure the intended knowledge in lessons. Teachers adapt learning well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to learn successfully alongside their peers.

At other times, learning is not presented clearly. Pupils do not receive the support they need in lessons to secure key knowledge. Teachers do not consistently check how well pupils are learning. As a result, misconceptions can go unnoticed in classes beyond early years.

When pupils develop gaps in their key knowledge, including in reading, the school generally identifies these. However, the support provided to help pupils catch up is not as effective as it needs to be. Overall, the school is supporting pupils to catch up, including pupils at the early stages of learning to read. However, the effectiveness of this catch up is variable. At

times, staff do not address the gaps in pupils' knowledge precisely and swiftly enough to help them catch up quickly.

The school has put a suitably planned curriculum in place across the different subjects. This identifies the key knowledge and vocabulary pupils are expected to learn. The curriculum begins in early years and builds progressively as pupils move through the school. Leaders have also considered carefully the knowledge their first Year 6 cohort should acquire as they complete their studies and prepare for secondary school.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

School leaders recognise that further work is needed to establish greater consistency in teaching and learning across the school. They have begun to implement the necessary improvements. However, some of these changes are recent, and their impact is not yet clearly evident. Leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the school. They are rightly proud of the caring and inclusive ethos and of their typically polite and well-rounded pupils.

The school provides staff with opportunities to access training and support, which ensures they receive up-to-date information. Staff value this input and describe how it helps them develop and improve. Despite this, staff require further training to secure greater consistency in practice across the school. This is essential to ensure that pupils experience consistently high-quality learning in all year groups.

Governors meet statutory duties, are supportive of the school and have an accurate understanding of school life. They visit regularly and understand the challenges leaders face. Governors provide appropriate challenge as well as support. They recognise the need for continued improvement and understand their role in holding leaders to account to ensure progress happens in a timely manner.

Staff generally feel well supported with their workload and wellbeing. Most feel able to approach school leaders and are confident they will be listened to and supported. However, this is not the case for all staff. Some would like further support from leaders when they face challenging situations. Similarly, a group of parents and carers do not feel they receive clear communication from the school. They do not feel as involved in school life as they would like. Leaders recognise there is further work to do to break down barriers and strengthen relationships with this group of stakeholders.

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

Pupils are guided by the school's well-known motto as they are encouraged to 'Aspire, Believe and Celebrate'. This helps them develop into respectful, kind individuals who are keen to learn. Pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, attend school well.

Children make a strong start in Reception. They quickly learn routines and expectations and develop positive learning habits. As pupils move through the school, however, some develop gaps in their knowledge. These gaps in key learning hinder how well pupils achieve overall.

Staff do not support pupils to catch up quickly enough when these gaps emerge. As a result, some pupils are not well prepared academically for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour around the school is typically positive. Pupils usually demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and enjoy the range of subjects they study. Playtime is lively and active, with games such as football, skipping and basketball taking place positively. Adults remain on hand to support pupils when needed. The school is generally a calm environment that supports learning well.

Pupils understand how to express their feelings and seek help if they find things difficult. They feel safe, listened to and well cared for. When pupils feel worried or anxious, they use strategies that help them share their concerns. Pupils are confident that adults will support them. Although bullying does occasionally occur, records show that staff take incidents seriously and address them effectively.

A wide range of roles and responsibilities gives pupils the chance to have an active voice in school life. Clubs and trips further enrich and enhance the curriculum for pupils across the school. These opportunities help develop pupils as well-rounded individuals.

Next steps

- Leaders, including governors, should ensure they act quickly and effectively to implement the necessary changes so they make timely and sustained improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff have the expertise to address gaps in pupils' knowledge effectively, particularly in the key foundations of learning, including pupils' transcriptional writing skills.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff receive targeted training and support to strengthen their expertise and pedagogical approaches so they can deliver the curriculum successfully across all subjects.
 - Leaders and governors need to further engage the school community, including parents and carers, to ensure they feel fully informed and valued as part of school life.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Martin Emsley.

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.

Inspection activities:

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

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of St Albans. It received its last section 48 inspection in March 2024.

Since the previous inspection, the school has transitioned from a lower school to a primary school. The school will see its first cohort of Year 6 pupils move on to secondary school in 2025–2026.

The school is split over 2 sites.

The school makes use of one unregistered provider of alternative provision.

Headteacher: Sue Rolfe

Lead inspector:

Jonny Wallace, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jennifer Brassington, Ofsted Inspector

Bryony Surtees, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Stevens, His Majesty's Inspector

Luke Wildig, 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 10 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

894

Well above 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

1,020

Well 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)

10.29%

Below 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

4.36%

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

12.75%

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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SLCN - Speech, language and Communication

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

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)	5.1%	5.5%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.4%	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)	9.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.0%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	11.5%	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.

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