

St Pauls CofE VA Primary School

Address: Coronation Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB2 1HJ

Unique reference number (URN): 110839

Inspection report: 13 January 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 

Pupils enjoy attending school and most do so regularly. Where leaders have concerns about attendance, they act swiftly. Leaders provide bespoke support to families to help remove any attendance barriers that pupils might face. They are successful with much of this work.

From the moment pupils arrive in the morning, the school is one where, generally, pupils behave well. They understand the routines and expectations the school has of them. There is consistency in the way staff manage behaviour. Should a pupil require extra support to manage their behaviour, staff provide this support well. This helps pupils to manage their feelings and emotions and re-engage with learning, where they need to. This leads to classrooms that are a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils want to learn. They are keen to find out more about the subjects they study and work hard during lessons.

Behaviour during social times is equally positive. Pupils enjoy coming together as a community in the dining hall to eat as one and chat about their day. They play gleefully together on the school playground. Pupils include each other in their games and show kindness and consideration towards each other.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a curriculum that, overall, supports pupils to secure their understanding of important knowledge. Typically, staff teach the curriculum well. Leaders understand where to make improvements to the curriculum and how it is taught. For example, refinements to the mathematics curriculum have led to improvements in pupils' fluency, number knowledge and understanding of calculations. Here, staff carefully check pupils' knowledge and adapt their teaching to address misconceptions skilfully. This helps pupils to build on what they know and can do and tackle new learning well when this is introduced.

Reading is a high priority across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy reading. Those who need extra help with reading are quickly identified. These pupils get the help they need to become confident and fluent readers.

Leaders have reviewed the English curriculum. They have designed a new curriculum that supports staff to better develop pupils' writing. However, there remains work to do to ensure that teaching consistently supports pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, to improve as writers. While pupils secure the important building blocks of knowledge they need, they often struggle to apply their knowledge when writing extended pieces of work.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a curriculum that supports children to be well prepared for Year 1. Reading and stories permeate the Reception Year environment. Children quickly learn to read new words. They develop their understanding of number and the building blocks of

writing knowledge. Staff typically teach the curriculum well. They support children to learn effectively across all areas of learning.

Staff often seek out children to develop their language and communication. When done well, this helps children to develop their vocabulary. For example, staff use descriptive language as children traverse the climbing frame. However, the quality of some interactions staff have with children is variable. Leaders know there is work needed to ensure that staff consistently maximise the opportunities they have to deepen children's language and vocabulary.

Staff work effectively with Nurseries and the Year 1 staff to support children to transition in and out of the Reception Year. Communication with parents and carers is effective. This enables staff to provide the ongoing support families need to help their children to progress. Of note is the way staff quickly identify where a child may face barriers to learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders know the barriers pupils face that prevent them from learning effectively. They identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities promptly and accurately. They identify where barriers exist for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Leaders provide training and guidance to staff so they put in place the right support for pupils. This means pupils generally progress appropriately through the curriculum from their different starting points.

Leaders maintain oversight of the progress pupils make through their ongoing and structured monitoring. This includes maintaining oversight of the use of any additional funding. This helps leaders to understand where to tweak and adapt the support on offer. This has developed further over the past year and has a positive impact. However, leaders know there is still more to do to support disadvantaged pupils' achievement, especially in writing.

Leaders work effectively with other professionals to ensure they secure the additional help and support for pupils who need it. This includes pupils and families who may speak English as an additional language. The work of leaders creates an inclusive school, where pupils' needs are identified and barriers to learning are typically removed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and realistic understanding of the school. They know what the school does well and what needs to improve. Leaders have refined their school improvement priorities over time. This gives them a much more precise understanding of the specific barriers that have prevented pupils from achieving as well as they want them to. Leaders have addressed priorities for improvement in a coherent way. They have had success with much of this work.

Leaders provide effective professional development for staff. This supports staff to manage their workload and feel well supported by leaders. Staff are incredibly proud to work at the school. This training also provides staff with the subject knowledge they need to typically provide effective support for pupils. Leaders review the impact of their training for staff. This

helps them to know where to provide more support, such as in how to teach the mathematics curriculum. Some staff training is newer in places. For example, in how to teach the English curriculum. Leaders should ensure that their plans to check the impact of their work are implemented well. This is so they can identify where to target additional staff training.

Governors know the school well. They check carefully on how well leaders are getting on with priorities for improvement. Governors' checks enable them to test out what leaders tell them. They are holding leaders to account for their actions. It also helps them understand that leaders are making decisions in the best interests of pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has put in place a clear programme for personal development. The focus of this is linked to the school's vision of 'life in all its fullness'. Leaders have carefully considered how to help pupils to live life to the full through the enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities they provide. Pupils benefit from the chance to learn new and develop existing talents and interests. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the opportunities they access. Clubs are a highlight of the day for lots of pupils. Many pupils take pride in playing the musical instruments they have learned or honing their computing skills during the coding club. Visiting a printing press to see the school newspaper being printed is a particular highlight for older pupils. They thrive being the journalists who produce the termly newspaper 'The Epistle'. This also helps to open pupils' eyes to potential future careers.

Leaders have carefully considered how the design of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum works alongside the wider personal development programme. Pupils secure their understanding of important content in PSHE, such as what a healthy relationship is. They understand how to keep safe, including when they are online. PSHE and the wider curriculum helps pupils to understand important values, such as tolerance and respect. Pupils live these values in the way they listen to and include each other.

The school provides effective pastoral support. Caring and attentive staff are well-tuned in to how to help pupils who may need extra support. This support helps pupils to develop both their confidence and their resilience. The personal development offer further builds the welcoming community that exists throughout the school and helps to mould the pupils as well-rounded individuals.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, struggle to apply their knowledge of vocabulary and different sentence structures when they write. This limits the quality of pupils' written work and means they are not as well prepared for future learning as they

could be. The English curriculum is starting to bring about improvements in pupils' writing. However, much of this is in its infancy.

Pupils achieve well in many areas of the curriculum. They typically secure their understanding of important knowledge across subjects to prepare for secondary school. Pupils confidently share what they know about geographical features or the different periods in history they have studied. Improvements to mathematics have positively impacted pupils' understanding of numbers and calculations. This is evident in improvements in outcomes in the Year 4 multiplication tables check and in the way pupils confidently apply their knowledge of number when solving more complex mathematical problems.

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

Pupils arrive at school in the morning with a smile on their face, keen to start learning. Pupils often join the school at various points throughout the school year. Many come from different countries and speak different languages. Some are only at the school for a short period of time before returning to their home country. The kind, caring culture means pupils are soon made to feel like they belong as part of the welcoming community the school strives to be. This diverse community comes together as one incredibly quickly and this enables pupils to feel happy, settled and valued members of the St Paul's family.

Pupils understand the important values that leaders want them to know. They display these values in the way they conduct themselves throughout the school day. Pupils listen well during lessons to staff and to each other. They work hard in their lessons and want to achieve well. Pupils who face barriers to their learning are supported effectively. This is because leaders accurately identify pupils' needs and help staff to understand how to meet them. While pupils achieve well in many subjects, they do not leave school as well prepared in writing as they could be.

Pupils value the many opportunities leaders provide for them outside of lessons. Whether playing chess, or learning Latin during clubs, the wider offer helps to open pupils' eyes to new and exciting talents and interests. Pupils are highly positive about the school. They are especially proud of sharing the differences they have. This helps to build the respectful ethos that exists here. Bullying is incredibly rare and swiftly dealt with should it happen. Pupils know that their peers will listen closely and show them respect as they share their own beliefs and views.

Next steps

- Leaders need to ensure that teaching supports pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to apply their knowledge of different vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar, punctuation and spelling more consistently into their written work.
- Leaders need to ensure they provide staff in the early years with the ongoing support and guidance they need to fully maximise opportunities to deepen children's language and vocabulary.

- Leaders, including governors, need to ensure their monitoring of newly introduced initiatives provides them with the information they need to identify where to adapt the planned professional development programme for staff.
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About this inspection

The chairs of governors in this school are Alexander Smith and Emma de Vaux.

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 a group of governors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, staff and 2 representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It received a section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in December 2017 and is due its next inspection this year.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Helen Darrell

Lead inspector:

Michael Williams, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lesley Stevens, Ofsted Inspector

Elizabeth Mace, Ofsted Inspector

Suzanne Thrower, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

152

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)

19.74%

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

2.63%

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

13.82%

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

Well 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	50%	61%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	38%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

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	83%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	91%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	55%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	45%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	71%	Below

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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	62%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	78%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	17%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	17%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	11%	44%	Below

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	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	60%	Below

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	33%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	11%	58%	Below

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	39%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	17%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	59%	Below

‘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	17%	68%	-51 pp
2024/25 (revised)	17%	69%	-53 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	11%	66%	-55 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	61%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	78%	-34 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	33%	78%	-44 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	11%	77%	-66 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	39%	80%	-41 pp
2024/25 (revised)	17%	81%	-64 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	79%	-35 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)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.2%	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)	15.2%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.9%	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.

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