

St Paul of the Cross Catholic Primary School

Address: Milnthorpe Road, Chapel Lane, St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Primary School, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 4PN

Unique reference number (URN): 111367

Inspection report: 20 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.

Strong standard

Early years

Strong standard 

The curriculum in the early years is ambitious and sets high expectations for children's achievement from the moment that they start in the Nursery class. Staff question and prompt children so that they think carefully about their learning. The way in which staff develop the use of language and vocabulary for 3-year-old children enables them to cooperate well with one another. The early years provision is making a marked difference to the depth of children's understanding by the end of their time in the Reception Year.

In the Reception Year, staff prioritise a love of reading and of books. Children secure their phonics knowledge to read words accurately. Similarly, the curriculum in all areas is well designed, and the tasks that children are given match specifically with the intended learning.

There is highly effective support for disadvantaged children, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language across the early years. Staff address the specific gaps that children have in their learning and provide ample opportunities for children to practise their prior knowledge before moving on to new learning.

Staff engage well with parents and carers to further promote children's achievement and to ensure that children are prepared well for the Year 1 curriculum.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

The way in which leaders have designed the curriculum to revisit and build on pupils' prior learning has ensured that pupils generally secure the essential knowledge in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils typically remember their learning and are well prepared for their next steps. This is broadly reflected in the outcomes pupils achieve in national tests and assessments. For example, the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is often at, or above, that seen nationally.

Where pupils' outcomes have been below national averages, such as in reading and mathematics, at the end of key stage 2, this does not reflect the positive progress and achievement of the current pupils at the school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make positive progress through the curriculum from their varied starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' attendance rates are close to the national average. Leaders' work has made a real difference in this area. They know pupils and their families well and understand the causes of absence. Leaders use this knowledge sensitively to work with parents and carers to help those pupils with the highest rates of persistent absence to attend school more regularly.

Pupils behave very well throughout the school. Staff and pupils alike know the school's policy for handling rare instances of misbehaviour, and this is applied consistently across the school. For example, staff set clear expectations for behaviour from the time that children set foot in the Nursery class. Positive behaviour is celebrated. It is common, including with the youngest children, to hear pupils being unwaveringly polite to one another. Staff tackle any misbehaviour quickly so that issues such as bullying are extremely rare.

Leaders have established a calm and inviting school environment where pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. This informs their decisions about what they need to improve. The reorganisation of the curriculum is setting high expectations for pupils and yielding positive results. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' essential skills and knowledge. For example, there is a highly structured approach to phonics and reading that develops seamlessly through the early years into key stage 1. Older pupils are guided well to read with fluency and comprehension.

Teachers revisit prior learning to ensure that pupils remember the most essential knowledge. Teachers understand the subjects that they teach. Through their questioning and the tasks that they provide, teachers challenge and support pupils to gain secure subject knowledge. Staff are skilled at adapting their teaching to meet pupils' needs. However, some pupils have misconceptions, in mathematics, that are not fully addressed. As a result, these pupils are not as confident at applying their mathematics knowledge as they otherwise could be.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils generally develop detailed knowledge of the subjects that they study. However, in a small number of subjects, the curriculum is being strengthened so pupils develop important knowledge and skills more effectively, for example chronology in history. Some aspects of the curriculum in these subjects are not understood as well as others.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a positive culture to ensure that all pupils feel included. There are clear systems in place to identify any special educational needs and/or disabilities that pupils may have. Leaders are quick to highlight where there might be other barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and for the growing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Leaders check on pupils' progress carefully to pinpoint any further help that pupils may need. Appropriate support, including suitable use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, is used well to reduce pupils' barriers to learning. Staff are well trained. As a result, they know how to adapt lessons and resources to enable pupils to learn more effectively. This means that pupils are typically progressing well through the curriculum from their different starting points.

The school has positive links with other agencies and makes the best use of advice to reduce barriers to pupils' learning. For example, teaching assistants in the early years support the development of children's vocabulary by implementing advice from speech and language specialists, particularly for children with EAL. Leaders engage well with parents and carers to support pupils' learning at home.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors understand their school well. They have successfully ensured that pupils continue to achieve well, despite a significant period of change in staffing and to the curriculum. Leaders have taken effective steps to redesign and improve the curriculum, particularly in mathematics. This is beginning to have an impact. For example, the way in which language has been promoted across the school has resulted in pupils reading with fluency and writing with a wider range of descriptive vocabulary. In a few subjects, the curriculum continues to develop. Leaders know that there are a few more tweaks to make to a small number of subjects for the impact of their actions to be fully realised.

Governors have a strong understanding of the school's effectiveness. They are assured about the quality of school improvement through regular checks on the school's work. Governors ensure that their statutory duties are met. They hold leaders to account when evaluating the achievement of different groups of pupils. Leaders use this information well to formulate the school's development priorities so that pupils are at the heart of their decision-making.

School improvement is managed in an assured and purposeful way so that all staff are on board. Staff feel appreciated by leaders. They value the consideration they receive for their workload and wellbeing. They appreciate the professional learning opportunities that they receive.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's effective personal development programme helps pupils to develop a strong moral sense of right and wrong. This is informed by their understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils know these values well and use them in their everyday interactions. They understand where they may need to resist peer pressure to make the right choices. They also have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, including when on social media.

Pupils reflect well on their beliefs and how their faith is similar to, and differs from, that of other religions. They learn about their own and others' cultures and respect difference. They listen to the views of others and form opinions in a sensible and informed way. Pupils know about the importance of treating others equally. Their understanding of diversity is preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have put in place a suitable programme for relationships education to ensure that pupils understand what makes a healthy friendship. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy and they understand the concept of consent.

Pupils enjoy a range of extra-curricular clubs that are based on their suggestions or interests, such as for science, arts and crafts activities and sports. Pupils also have opportunities to learn about the wider world and their place in it through fundraising events, such as coffee mornings and supporting global development charity events. Leaders have ensured that all aspects of pupils' personal development are accessible to, and benefit, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging to this small and nurturing school. Staff know pupils and their families well. Parents and carers value the 'family feel' of the school that ensures that pupils are safe, included and understood. The school's values of faith, hope, love and learning set high aspirations for pupils in all aspects of their lives. Pupils feel supported to make the right choices and respect one another.

Leaders ensure that they identify and address any barriers to pupils' learning at the earliest opportunity so that pupils progress well from their starting points. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically achieve well.

Pupils enjoy school because of the warm atmosphere that staff have fostered. They are enthusiastic learners with positive attitudes towards their education. This is reflected in the large number of pupils who have high rates of attendance. Pupils feel safe from the harmful effects of bullying because staff intervene at the smallest signs of misbehaviour. Pupils trust any member of staff with their worries. They know that they will be cared for well.

Leaders have ensured that the wider opportunities on offer match pupils' talents and ambitions. There are a range of after-school clubs that cater for pupils' interests. Older pupils value the responsibilities that they carry out around the school, such as being play leaders for younger pupils. The school's personal development offer ensures that pupils have a strong understanding of fundamental British Values. Trips, such as a recent school council visit to the local mayor, and opportunities to debate current affairs, contribute to pupils being well prepared for a role in modern British society. They also have opportunities to learn about the wider world and their place in it through charity events and their curriculum studies.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the misconceptions of some pupils in mathematics are addressed more effectively so that these pupils are more confident to apply their mathematical knowledge when solving problems.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching develops pupils' subject-specific knowledge more securely in a small number of subjects so that they better understand the subject disciplines.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Helen McNicholas.

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 the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other school leaders. They also spoke to representatives from the governing body, the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. These have included a reorganisation of classes to teach in mixed-age year groups.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's previous section 48 inspection of schools with a religious character took place in March 2023.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher : Clare Abram

Lead inspector:

Steve Bentham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Kathryn Nichol, 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

124

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)

27.19%

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

4.03%

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

19.35%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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	58%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	60%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	61%	60%	Close to average

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	66%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	73%	Below

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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	64%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	52%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	17%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	76%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	62%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	52%	68%	-15 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	17%	67%	-51 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	66%	4 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	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	80%	78%	2 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	76%	78%	-2 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	80%	77%	3 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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	79%	-9 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)	5.1%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.3%	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)	13.5%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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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