

The Priory Church of England Primary School

Address: Wick Lane, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 1HX

Unique reference number (URN): 113847

Inspection report: 19 May 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

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a positive start when they begin in the early years. Staff work in partnership with parents and carers before children start at the school to ease the transition into school. They form strong bonds with children, which helps them to settle quickly.

The curriculum sets out clearly what children should learn across the 7 areas of learning. Leaders have strengthened staff expertise in the teaching of the curriculum. As a result, staff know the curriculum well and adapt it effectively. Therefore, children build the appropriate knowledge and skills securely over time. For example, staff create opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills, using tweezers, in preparation for writing.

Children learn in a language-rich environment. Staff ensure children benefit from listening to stories and joining in with rhymes. Through these, children broaden their vocabulary. Staff plan activities carefully to deepen children's understanding. For example, pupils observe butterflies emerging from chrysalises to better understand lifecycles.

Children show many effective characteristics of learning. For instance, they learn to follow the school's code of conduct and routines for listening and sitting sensibly on the carpet. Typically, children achieve well from their starting points and are ready for Year 1. Children start to learn to read as soon as they start school. Staff identify anyone who falls behind and they provide support for children to catch up quickly.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The school has been through a period of turbulence. Leaders have brought about stability and strengthened the school's strategic direction. There is now an ambitious vision in place to provide high quality education for all pupils. Leaders have a full understanding of the school's context. They have worked at pace to identify the right priorities and are taking action to improve the school further. Leaders have strengthened the personal development and wellbeing offer. They have also overhauled the early years' curriculum. Their work has had impact. Children leave the Reception Year well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders foster a culture of openness and trust. Parents and carers typically speak positively about the school and hold it in high regard. Leaders build links with families and the wider community. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing. They ensure all staff benefit from high-quality professional learning programmes. These develop staff's expertise over time. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Governors are knowledgeable about the context of the school. They understand the school's priorities and areas to develop. Governors perform their statutory duties effectively. They provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge. Governors assure themselves of the impact of all aspects of the school's work through precise monitoring and quality assurance. They ensure leaders focus on the actions for improvement that have the greatest impact on pupils. Governors hold leader to account appropriately and effectively. Along with leaders, governors always make decisions in the best interests of pupils.

The school's personal development and wellbeing provision prepares pupils well for life beyond school. Lessons are sequenced well so that they successfully cover the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. The safety curriculum helps pupils understand how to keep safe in their local environment. For example, pupils understand how to look after themselves near water. They know they should swim between the flags when visiting the beach. They are equally knowledgeable about how to stay safe online.

Effective pastoral support removes barriers to pupils' social and emotional development. Leaders ensure that pupils who require therapeutic provision receive support to alleviate their anxieties. This is particularly effective in supporting pupils to have a positive start to the day. Consequently pupils' punctuality and attendance have improved. Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements for relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils understand how to maintain wellbeing. They make informed choices about lifestyle and welfare. Pupils learn about healthy relationships. They know what to do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values. For example, they understand the importance of equality and challenge stereotypes. Pupils develop respect towards people's differences that are protected in law. They understand the importance of democracy and make links to opportunities to vote within school when selecting house captains. The school keeps its personal development programme under regular review. This ensures that it remains relevant and responsive to pupils' needs. Leaders assure themselves of equity of opportunity. They remove any obstacles to participation in the broader range of school activities. Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding. For example, they provide individualised support to ensure that any pupils who fall behind, receive the support they need to catch up. Leaders track pupils' engagement in enrichment opportunities to ensure that pupils are equipped with the awareness, skills and character to thrive.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as highly as they should. This is reflected in pupils' outcomes in some national tests. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make sufficient progress from their starting points.

Teaching does not identify and address pupils' gaps in learning effectively so that gaps persist and widen over time. The work pupils produce reflects ongoing weaknesses in their knowledge and skills. This impedes their ability to build securely on what they have already learned. Consequently, many pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders have begun to address weaknesses. They have strengthened the curriculum and have begun to improve the way the curriculum is taught. Their work is having some impact.

However, it is too early to see the full impact of leaders' work in many subjects.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders prioritise attendance. Leaders' expectations about attendance are communicated sensitively and consistently to pupils and their families. As a result, pupils and parents and carers understand the school's expectations well. Consequently, attendance is typically above the national average. Leaders analyse pupils' attendance meticulously. They have a clear understanding of factors lying behind poor attendance. They know and address the barriers that stop some pupils from attending school. Leaders put personalised actions swiftly into place for pupils who struggle to attend regularly. For example, leaders support pupils' sense of belonging through additional opportunities for outdoor learning. Leaders work well with external professionals, parents and carers. Together, they help pupils build positive attendance habits.

Leaders have strengthened the behaviour policy. This reflects their expectations that pupils are 'ready, respectful and safe'. However, not all staff implement the behaviour policy consistently. This makes it hard for pupils to remember and understand the school's expectations. In lessons, while many pupils work quietly and concentrate on their learning, others become disengaged. Some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour when the curriculum does not match their needs. At times, the behaviour of some pupils in lessons distracts others from their work. Transitions between the classroom and the playground are not orderly. Nonetheless, pupils enjoy spending time together and play harmoniously in the playground at social times.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Inconsistencies in teaching mean pupils do not build up their subject knowledge in an incremental way. Although reading is taught well, pupils do not develop the basic skills they need in writing and mathematics. This means that pupils do not build successfully on previous learning. Too often teaching does not address misconceptions, meaning gaps in pupils' learning persist. In addition, teachers do not consistently make accurate adaptations to lessons for pupils who would benefit from this. Therefore, some pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities and disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress they should.

Nevertheless, leaders' vision for the curriculum and teaching is appropriately ambitious. Leaders have significantly strengthened the way the curriculum is designed across all subjects. The curriculum now sets out the important knowledge and skills pupils need from early years to Year 6. Leaders recognise that the way the curriculum is taught needs strengthening. They are rightly providing staff with training to develop their expertise. However, it is early days and too soon to see the full impact of leaders' work.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders have made a positive start to improve the provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nonetheless, there remains much to do. Support for pupils who face barriers to their learning is not yet consistent across the

school. While some pupils receive the right support to help them learn well, this is not the case for all pupils. This results in some pupils not being able to access the intended learning successfully.

Leaders typically have a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. However, pupils' learning plans are not sufficiently detailed or precise. Pupils' starting points and gaps in learning are not always known or understood. Therefore, teaching does not address pupils' barriers to learning effectively. Consequently, pupils do not progress as well as they could.

Leaders act on advice and guidance from a wide range of external experts to support pupils' specific needs. Leaders are keen to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use additional funding such as the pupil premium effectively to remove barriers to disadvantaged pupils' wellbeing. For example, they ensure pupils who would benefit from mental health support, receive support, such as through the nurturing forest school.

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

The Priory Church of England Primary School is a welcoming place to learn. The school is at the heart of the locality. Pupils and parents appreciate the caring ethos which is underpinned by the school's distinctive values. Staff greet pupils warmly. They build trusting relationships, which help pupils settle and develop a sense of belonging. Most pupils attend well. Pupils feel safe and know that staff will help them if they have any worries. Bullying is not tolerated.

The school has been through a period of change. Leaders have begun to stabilise the school. They have accurately identified and prioritised areas to strengthen. This is starting to bear fruit in some areas. Nevertheless, there remains more to do to ensure that pupils receive the quality of education they should. This is because the way the curriculum is taught does not help pupils to know and remember important information. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for their next stage of education. Some pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing other barriers to learning do not receive the support they need to progress well from their starting points. In addition, staff do not implement the behaviour policy consistently. Therefore, not all pupils understand behaviour expectations.

Despite these weaknesses, pupils appreciate opportunities to develop their interests. For example, pupils enjoy clubs such as tennis and cricket. Pupils relish opportunities to display their talents through community performances. They benefit from leadership opportunities. Older pupils are 'buddies' to younger children. Through these responsibilities they develop a sense of accountability and independence. Social times are positive and typically harmonious. Pupils make warm friendships. They play together safely and use equipment responsibly. Pupils benefit from a range of educational visits. For example, pupils visit the Houses of Parliament to deepen their understanding of democracy.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from precise support so that they progress well from their starting points.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers and those with subject oversight strengthen their expertise so that the curriculum is taught well and its impact checked, so that pupils secure the important knowledge and skills they need for their next stage of education.
 - Leaders should ensure that assessment is used to identify and address misconceptions and gaps in learning so that pupils build successfully on their previous learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff implement the school's expectations for behaviour consistently so that pupils understand what is expected of them and behave well.
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About this inspection

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and the wider senior leadership team during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the chair of governors and other governors, a representative of the Diocese of Winchester and the local authority school effectiveness advisor.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Winchester. Its last section 48 inspection was in October 2025.

The school currently makes use of 3 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2025.

Simon Croutear: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Liz Geller, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Carl Thornton, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Wilson, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

203

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)

10.34%

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

4.93%

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

16.75%

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)

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	67%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	62%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	82%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to 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	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	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	74%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	66%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	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	50%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	57%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	57%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	44%	66%	-22 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	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	56%	78%	-23 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	57%	78%	-21 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	77%	-11 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	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 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 (3 term)	6.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.7%	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 (3 term)	12.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	14.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.8%	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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