

# Soudley School

**Address:** Soudley, Cinderford, Gloucestershire, GL14 2UA

**Unique reference number (URN):** 115521

## 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 ●

### Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders work collaboratively with parents and carers to identify pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities swiftly and accurately. They seek out and act on advice from external agencies when needed. Alongside teaching staff, leaders establish how best to support pupils' individual needs. Leaders routinely check the impact of the support that they put in place on pupils' outcomes. Staff skilfully adjust this support when they spot that a different approach is needed.

Teachers expertly adapt learning for pupils so they can access new or more complex ideas. They carefully break learning down into small steps for pupils who need it. For example, some pupils use choice boards to support their writing. The school provides staff with the right training so that they work effectively with pupils, when putting extra help in place.

The school's strong and positive culture of inclusion is reflected in the respect pupils show towards others who may be different to them. This has a highly positive impact on pupils' experiences of school. It contributes towards an environment in which pupils develop a sense of belonging.

Leaders use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' attendance and broaden their experiences. For example, it is used successfully to enable all pupils to access a range of enrichment opportunities and clubs.

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## Expected standard ●

### Achievement

Expected standard ●

Most pupils achieve outcomes that are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. Pupils typically progress well through the curriculum but published outcomes in this small school do not always reflect this. The most recent published outcomes in phonics do not reflect the current quality of early reading education that pupils receive.

Leaders regularly check the progress that pupils make through the curriculum to ensure that pupils achieve as well as possible. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make suitable progress from their starting points. Improvements made in the phonics, writing and mathematics curriculums are having an impact on the quality of work pupils produce. This is especially the case in key stage 1. Leaders are continuing to further strengthen pupils' writing.

Pupils' contributions to class discussions typically demonstrate a secure understanding of their learning. On the whole, pupils are prepared well for their next stage of learning.

## Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils arrive punctually at school. Staff greet them warmly and pupils across the school settle quickly. Attendance figures are broadly in line with national expectations. Leaders track and analyse absence information to help them to understand the causes of pupil absence. Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve attendance. They keep in close contact with families to help them make the changes required to get pupils into school every day. As a result of the work of leaders and staff, pupils' attendance is improving over time. Pupils know that being in school regularly is important.

At Soudley, each day is approached with the mantra of 'politeness is the norm'. Pupils and staff treat each other with courtesy and politeness. Pupils listen, show respect and care for one another. A calm and orderly environment pervades the school. The small number of pupils who need additional help to manage their emotions and behaviour receive effective support to do so. Pupils demonstrate empathy by recognising each other's needs at school, incidents of bullying are rare. If pupils are concerned about anything, they report it to trusted adults. Staff deal with any issues quickly and take pupils' concerns seriously.

## Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge and skills as they progress through the school. Leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which it should be taught at each stage. This helps teachers to teach with confidence. Staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge across the curriculum.

Leaders have established effective systems to support teachers to routinely check what pupils know and remember. Teachers use this information to adapt learning in lessons and provide extra support when needed. There are times when teaching does not correct errors in writing or address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders are addressing this through their careful and ongoing review of the curriculum.

Pupils typically enjoy their learning. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged access and benefit from learning the same curriculum as their peers.

Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that teaching supports pupils to secure important knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils build secure foundations in their learning from the early years upwards. Leaders are rightly continuing to develop pupils' foundations in writing, including handwriting, to enable them to confidently access the wider curriculum.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Children make a positive start to school. Staff know children very well and foster warm, positive relationships. This creates a safe and nurturing environment in which children are happy and confident.

Staff adapt the curriculum to develop children's interests and learning needs. This enables children to make progress from their starting points. The school's curriculum provides regular opportunities for children to gain skills in the early stages of reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders prioritise the teaching of phonics from the beginning of Reception. Staff teach phonics with consistency. They regularly check that children recognise and pronounce the sounds that letters make correctly. They provide timely and effective support for children who fall behind, ensuring that gaps are quickly addressed. Parents and carers receive clear guidance about reading, which helps them to support their children's reading at home.

Staff identify and address barriers to learning accurately. Children with special educational needs and/disabilities and disadvantaged children access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Children benefit from an outdoor environment and a range of activities that strengthen fine and gross motor skills. Children follow routines and expectations consistently, and adults use every day social interactions deliberately to support children's personal and social development. All adults place a strong emphasis on developing children's vocabulary. As a result, children are typically ready for the next stages of their learning.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Expected standard** 

Since the previous inspection, leaders have driven school improvement with meticulous attention. They place pupils at the centre of every decision they make. Leaders have successfully made improvements and they know where provision could be further strengthened. Leaders have a firm grasp on how the curriculum is taught and where it may need refining. They have ensured that their high expectations for behaviour are fulfilled through shared values, policies and practice. Leaders have established a nurturing and inclusive culture across the school.

Leaders and governors build positive working relationships with parents and carers in this small community school. Leaders welcome external professional agencies and work with them to keep their school improvement strategies up to date and effective. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well. They understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors provide clarity of vision, strategic direction and appropriate challenge and support to enable the school's continual improvement.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel supported by leaders and governors and appreciate the care leaders take to support their wellbeing and workload. Teachers benefit from a carefully designed professional learning programme across the federation, which builds their expertise and gives them the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum effectively.

## **Personal development and wellbeing**

**Expected standard** 

The personal development programme is coherent and broad. It is designed to reflect the needs of pupils within the community the school serves.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer, including frisbee and other sports clubs. Leaders carefully track pupils' participation in these clubs to ensure all pupils, including those who

are disadvantaged, benefit from wider enrichment. Trips, such as visits to the local Heritage Centre, also enrich pupils' experiences of their local area.

Leaders know children well and provide effective pastoral support for those pupils who may struggle to manage their emotions. Pupils develop their understanding of wellbeing through the curriculum.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is well thought through to develop pupils' knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. The potential risks and benefits in the use of computing are known to the pupils. However, their knowledge of some aspects of the PSHE and relationships curriculum is not yet as embedded as leaders intend. For example, pupils' recall of previous learning about relationships and other cultures is not secure. While they know some ways to be healthy, their knowledge and understanding of ways to stay safe beyond online safety, as well as their knowledge and understanding of different religions, is weaker.

The school's work on developing pupils' understanding of human rights and fundamental British values is having a greater impact. Consequently, pupils know their rights and responsibilities well. This helps them to make the right choices in managing their behaviour around the school and in lessons. Pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles that help them develop confidence and teamwork. For example, school councillors are proud of their role. They enjoyed their visit to the Houses of Parliament to support their understanding of democracy, linked to their role. Pupils are typically well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Pupils at Soudley enjoy their time here. From the moment they join the school in the early years, they love coming to school. They feel welcome, safe and show a strong sense of belonging. As a result, pupils attend regularly. They enjoy playtimes and using the play equipment. Older and younger pupils mix and play together happily.

Pupils enjoy learning the school's engaging curriculum. They speak enthusiastically about their learning across different subjects. For example, pupils enjoy finding out about historic events and people, such as Martin Luther King and civil rights, and how they connect to issues in modern Britain.

Leaders set high aspirations for every pupil. Typically, most pupils achieve outcomes close to the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive. They get the right help in school to be able to enjoy their learning and develop as confident members of the community. Pupils are generally ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils develop their understanding of individual rights and responsibilities. They recognise discrimination and understand the effect it has. This supports pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders have carefully selected books that broaden pupils' cultural awareness and their understanding of diversity. Pupils enjoy reading these texts.

Pupils are guided by the school's 'SHINE' values of listen, care, respect, kindness and always doing their best. Pupils demonstrate these values through their actions. They show

empathy in how they treat others. Bullying is rare. Pupils trust that if it did occur, staff would deal with it swiftly and effectively.

School councillors speak with pride about their school. Pupils enjoy whole school trips together. A recent visit to Barry Island, where pupils explored the rugged landscape and forest, brought their learning about natural structures to life.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to secure consistently high attendance for all pupils and ensure that this is sustained over time.
  - Leaders should ensure pupils remember important content in the personal, social, health and economic curriculum so that they develop secure knowledge and understanding.
  - Leaders should ensure the impact of the new approach to teaching writing is reviewed regularly so that pupils' handwriting and the quality of writing continues to improve.
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## About this inspection

The school is part of a federation called Forest Federation of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools.

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 executive headteacher, senior leaders and several staff. The lead inspector also spoke with the local authority, one alternative provision, the chair of governors and the vice chair of governors. Some parents were also spoken with.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has used alternative provision recently, but is not currently using any.

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Mel Davis

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### Lead inspector:

Thomas Brewer, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspector:

Jack Lacey, 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

**41**

Well 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

**77**

Well 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)

**17.07%**

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**

**14.63%**

Well 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**

**24.39%**

Well 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 43%         | 61%              | Below                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 50%         | 62%              | Below                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 50%         | 61%              | Below                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 30%         | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 63%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 75%         | 75%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 58%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 60%         | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 60%         | 72%              | Below                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 75%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 67%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 40%         | 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 | 57%         | 73%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 50%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 67%         | 73%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 50%         | 73%              | Below                          |

**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 | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 47%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 44%              | S                              |

**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 | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 63%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 60%              | S                              |

### 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 | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 58%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 58%              | S                              |

### 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 | S           | 60%              | S                              |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 61%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 59%              | S                              |

‘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 | S           | 68%                              | S                       |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 69%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 67%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 66%                              | S                       |

### 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 | S           | 80%                              | S                       |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 80%                              | S                       |

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 (final) | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

### 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 | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 77%                              | S                       |

### 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 | S           | 80%                              | S                       |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |

‘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) | 5.7%        | 5.2%             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 4.8%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 6.0%        | 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) | 19.5%       | 13.3%            | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 11.8%       | 14.6%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 17.7%       | 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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