

St Mary's CofE Primary School

Address: Credenhill, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR4 7DW

Unique reference number (URN): 116799

Inspection report: 21 April 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' published outcomes have historically been variable. Additionally, in a small number of foundation subjects, pupils do not secure the important learning or vocabulary as well as they could. However, in most lessons from the early years onwards, pupils generally achieve well and engage positively in learning. A renewed focus on pupils' basic skills, including in reading, means that pupils secure these important foundations in their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged receive effective support and achieve well from their starting points. As a result, pupils are typically well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is particularly the case in the core subjects. Published outcomes show that leaders' work to improve achievement for disadvantaged pupils is paying off. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics for these pupils is now broadly in line with national averages.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' work to promote high levels of attendance is effective. Overall attendance is broadly in line with national averages and improving over time. Similarly, persistent absence is below national averages and continues to improve. For some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attendance is above national averages. Leaders ensure that, where there are barriers to attending, these are effectively removed.

Leaders have established high expectations for behaviour. Staff and pupils alike have a shared understanding of these. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Routines are embedded from the early years, where children quickly learn to listen carefully and follow instructions. Manners are explicitly taught and pupils consistently demonstrate the school values. Subtle adaptations, where needed, are effective for pupils who need additional support with their behaviour.

Leaders ensure that behaviour expectations are modelled well by adults. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils understand what bullying is and say that it rarely happens. Pupils know that trusted adults will listen and help if they raise any concerns that they might have.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Overall, leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. There is some variability in how some of the foundation subjects are delivered and the sequences in which some important learning is taught. The organisation of when some subjects are taught hampers pupils' ability to build on previous learning. As a result, some pupils do not securely recall some key knowledge in a small number of subjects.

Leaders have recently, and effectively, focused on improving further the curriculum and teaching in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. These subjects are taught well. Teachers typically give clear explanations. Leaders have ensured that phonics is taught effectively. Staff understand pupils' starting points well and ensure that pupils learn the

sounds and the skills they need to become fluent readers. Skilful support helps pupils who need a little more support to keep up. Leaders' recent changes have ensured that pupils secure their understanding of basic number and early mathematics more readily. In the core subjects, teachers check for gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Where gaps exist, they adapt subsequent teaching to close them. Teachers adapt the curriculum effectively so that all pupils can take part and achieve.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Leaders and staff build secure relationships with children and their parents and carers. They work closely with families and external support, where appropriate, to identify and overcome barriers. Staff deployment is responsive and additional adult support is used skilfully so that more vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn alongside their peers. As a result, children quickly settle into school. They feel safe, happy and ready to learn.

Leaders ensure that children learn what they need to in order to start reading and writing fluently. Whole-class and small-group phonics teaching is effective, as is the teaching of early number and mathematics. As a result, children are typically being well prepared for learning in Year 1 and beyond, although not all children achieve as highly as they could by the end of early years.

Leaders and staff have a sharp focus on developing children's communication and vocabulary. Staff model language effectively and extend vocabulary through purposeful play and stories. Leaders have taken careful decisions which promote routines and children's readiness for learning. The curriculum is well designed, and adults provide engaging activities that stimulate curiosity.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders quickly get to know pupils and families. This helps them to swiftly identify any barriers. Leaders focus sharply on overcoming each of these barriers so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are known (or previously known) to social care, can thrive. Leaders are acutely aware of the impact for pupils of belonging to a military family, particularly when pupils may have attended several schools previously. They are well versed in helping all pupils to quickly settle in and form firm friendships. This makes everybody feel included.

Leaders make very effective use of working with external professionals. These partnerships enrich the support on offer to pupils, including those with highly complex needs. Staff, too, benefit from this shared expertise. This helps them to confidently make appropriate adjustments to learning and the learning environment, when needed. Leaders also make effective use of alternative provision. They carefully choose providers who can offer the right help, at the right time.

Leaders check the impact of their support and adjust this, where needed. The school's pupil premium strategy is used to good effect to reduce and remove barriers to learning and wellbeing for disadvantaged pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors know the school and its families well. They are acutely aware of the context of the school, including what is special about serving a community with a high proportion of many military families. Leaders understand the school's positive impact on pupils who are most vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other disadvantages. They focus carefully on these groups of pupils. However, there are time when leaders could focus more sharply on other school-wide priorities so that improvements are fully effective.

That said, there is a strong, shared vision between leaders, governors and staff for every pupil to 'be their best'. The school places pupils at the very centre of its decision-making. Governors offer appropriate support and challenge. They use their effective training to help leaders take important decisions. Governors fulfil their statutory duties.

Staff benefit from effective professional development which helps them to develop specific expertise and leadership skills. Leaders work closely with other schools and the local authority, and staff appreciate these opportunities to work with colleagues in these local networks. Staff are proud to work at the school and appreciate the steps leaders and governors take to promote their wellbeing.

Leaders have forged strong links with the wider community, including the local military base. Parents and carers are very positive about the school's work. They appreciate the caring and committed staff and describe St Mary's as 'a family'.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders organise a range of enrichment activities, including school trips and visitors. There is a range of clubs on offer, including sports, drama, cheerleading and 'pony club'. However, some opportunities to really develop pupils' cultural capital are more limited than they could be. For example, pupils visit a church but do not currently visit any other places of worship. Leaders have not yet ensured that they remove the barriers some pupils face in attending clubs and events.

Pupils relish their 'forest school' sessions. Whittling, for example, teaches them how to use tools safely. Pupils also enjoy 'fitness Fridays' and other opportunities which help them to develop character and leadership skills. This extends their enjoyment of school and encourages pupils to try new things. Leaders make sure that all pupils in the school benefit from swimming lessons every year.

Pupils thrive because of the carefully tailored pastoral support that they receive. Pupils from military families enjoy and benefit from attending the 'Dandelions' group which gives them a space to share their experiences and foster a real sense of belonging.

Pupils benefit from a well-sequenced personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. For example, they understand how to keep themselves safe online, how to be a good friend and, in an age-appropriate way, about healthy relationships. The school makes sure that the personal development curriculum is adapted, when needed, so that it meets pupils' different needs. Pupils also learn how to keep themselves safe in the local area, for example when cycling. Pupils learn, and model, the school's values, such as hope, resilience and perseverance. The school's positive ethos is woven through school life.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this inclusive school where everyone receives a warm welcome. They attend very well and are proud of St Mary's and of belonging to the school 'family'. The school serves a community where a large proportion of pupils are from military families. As a result, many join or leave the school partway through the year. All pupils, from all backgrounds, benefit from effective pastoral support which helps them to quickly form friendships and to look out for one another.

Pupils know that leaders care deeply and want the best for everyone. They feel, and are, well looked after. Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe in different ways, including when they are online. They know that there is always a trusted adult to speak to if they have a concern. There are warm, respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils' individual needs are well understood and met, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils behave well in school. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils listen carefully in lessons and consistently use the good manners modelled to them by staff. They enjoy learning, both indoors and out. Pupils of all ages particularly enjoy, and benefit from, 'forest school' activities and 'fitness Fridays', where they learn important life skills as well as the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Through assemblies and other experiences, pupils develop an understanding of their 'moral compass' and the values which form the 'St Mary's 6'. These include, for example, tolerance and respect. Pupils are very clear that everybody should be treated equally and they understand differences between people.

Pupils generally learn the important knowledge and skills that they need for their next stages of education. This is not consistently reflected in published outcomes, in part due to the high mobility of pupils attending the school.

Next steps

- Leaders should broaden the opportunities for all pupils to fully access a wide and rich range of experiences within and beyond school.
- Leaders should streamline their school improvement priorities so that they can focus more effectively on the most important things, leading to consistent improvement in standards across all areas of the school's work.

- Leaders should check the implementation and impact of wider curriculum subjects so that all pupils can develop a deeper understanding across the whole curriculum.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Reverend Mark Johnson.

The school is part of a federation called The Grow, Learn, Flourish Herefordshire Partnership.

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.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Hereford. Its last section 48 inspection was in October 2019.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders in school, representatives from the local governing body, staff, pupils and some parents during the inspection.

Inspectors also confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of one alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher : Bernadette Davies

Lead inspector:

Rachel Henrick, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Heather Simpson, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

140

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)

12.14%

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

2.14%

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

13.57%

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	49%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	59%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	45%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	46%	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	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	82%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	65%	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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	82%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	65%	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	36%	46%	Below
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	64%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	73%	59%	Above
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	55%	60%	Close to average
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	36%	68%	-31 pp
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	64%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
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	73%	78%	-5 pp
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	55%	80%	-25 pp
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)	5.1%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.1%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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)	13.0%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	16.8%	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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