

Victoria Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Address: Prince Edward Street, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 3HA

Unique reference number (URN): 117423

Inspection report: 12 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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Overall, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education, particularly in the early years. Children demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Older pupils recall their learning, use it to build up their understanding and explain their thinking with enthusiasm.

Pupils develop a range of language and communication skills. The school focuses on accuracy and fluency in reading, spelling, handwriting, and number facts. When leaders identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, they address them promptly. Staff use a range of personalised strategies to support pupils who need additional help. They are well trained to do this consistently. This has proved successful in the national Year 1 phonics screening check, where pupils consistently achieve well compared to pupils nationally.

Pupils apply their knowledge confidently across subjects. Pupils practise handwriting regularly ensuring they are following key instructions from the teachers. This ensures that handwriting is not a barrier to them demonstrating their understanding.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders promote regular school attendance before children even start at the school. It is celebrated in the school newsletter for each class. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance rigorously and personalise their approach to support individuals and their families. This includes giving pupils responsibilities, inviting them to breakfast club, and offering parental support. Consequently, most pupils attend school regularly. Overall attendance is consistently above national averages.

Leaders and staff have established a highly positive learning culture. Pupils of all ages feel that they belong and can flourish. Leaders embed this culture in the early years and build on it in key stage 1. Staff explicitly teach clear routines. They adapt approaches to meet individual needs, ensuring that pupils engage positively in learning. Any pupils who need additional support receive it.

Leaders support staff to develop pupils' regulation and emotional literacy, reducing low-level disruption. Therefore, lessons and the school day run smoothly. Pupils demonstrate self-discipline and build secure relationships based on kindness, empathy, and respect. Leaders respond swiftly and skilfully to changing circumstances, maintaining a safe and inclusive environment where they do not tolerate bullying, discrimination, or derogatory language. This ensures that all pupils feel safe, valued, and able to focus on their learning and personal development.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders in the early years ensure children continually develop, preparing them very well for the next stage of their learning. The early years curriculum underpins the whole-school

curriculum. This enables children to gain the important knowledge and skills they need to progress into year 1.

The early years environment is highly enabling for all pupils. This is because it is well-planned, thoughtfully-resourced, and engaging. Children access learning independently and confidently. Staff use resources purposefully and effectively to support all areas of learning, promote sustained engagement, and secure high levels of participation. Adults set clear expectations and reinforce them consistently. They teach pupils how to use resources and other materials. Pupils understand expectations within each area of provision. As a result, children demonstrate positive learning behaviours and respect for shared spaces and materials.

Adults deliver high-quality interactions during focused teaching, informal moments, and care routines. They use these opportunities skilfully to model language, extend thinking, and foster secure relationships. Staff track pupils' learning and development carefully to identify precise next steps. They support children who engage less readily very well, ensuring full inclusion. Staff provide additional support swiftly or seek external advice when needed and communicate closely with parents. This approach ensures consistently strong outcomes for all children.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The curriculum is intentionally designed to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders plan carefully each subject and year group. The curriculum sets out clearly what pupils will learn and when. This ensures that pupils build up their knowledge and skills and progress well through the curriculum.

Leaders emphasise the important skills in reading, writing, and handwriting. They recognise that these are essential for pupils to be able to access the wider curriculum. Leaders prioritise pupils' language development. For pupils in the early stages of reading, leaders ensure that staff teach phonics consistently and effectively. This approach secures strong outcomes in the national phonics screening check. In mathematics, pupils develop their understanding of number, including different ways to represent it.

Most staff understand the importance of high-quality teaching and the strategies needed to achieve this. However, a few staff do not consistently follow agreed approaches. In the most successful classrooms, pupils contribute confidently and participate fully in their learning.

Staff provide individual pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with carefully considered adjustments and adaptations to the curriculum. On occasion, pupils need to develop more independence so that they can confidently access whole-class teaching and participate fully.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs and barriers to learning and/or wellbeing accurately and swiftly. There is a particular focus during transition points between different years. Leaders develop secure relationships with families to support identified or emerging needs. Pupils access learning alongside their peers wherever possible, so high expectations are realised. For some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders draw on recognised best practice. When it is appropriate, they seek external professional expertise to inform their strategies for best meeting pupils' needs.

Leaders review their provision regularly to monitor its impact on pupils' achievement and wellbeing. Pupils and parents and carers are central to this process, and leaders actively seek their views. Leaders use their additional funding to raise aspiration, engagement, and attainment using evidence-informed strategies. Staff check that all pupils make progress. If they do not, leaders adapt provision swiftly.

The school works in partnership with a small number of alternative provisions to support some pupils with barriers to learning. These arrangements help remove those barriers, promote inclusion and ensure pupils succeed across the curriculum.

Staff maintain high expectations for all pupils and provide consistent support, so that pupils build confidence and resilience, over time. Leaders monitor outcomes closely and refine their approaches to secure sustained improvement.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and well-informed understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. They work closely with the partner school within the federation to ensure that pupils develop the skills and knowledge needed for the next stage of their education. Leaders place pupils' best interests at the centre of every decision.

Governors are highly committed to ensuring that the school provides the best possible education for all pupils. They bring a broad range of expertise and skills, which they use effectively to support and challenge school leaders. Governors seek the views of staff and parents regularly. This enables a collaborative approach to achieving the school's strategic priorities and sustaining improvement over time. Governors visit the school regularly, so that they can see day-to-day, how pupils learn as well as having the opportunity to speak to them about their wellbeing.

Leaders use professional learning strategically to support improvement priorities, build staff's expertise and ensure consistency across all phases. They remain mindful of staff wellbeing and workload, ensuring expectations are manageable. Staff enjoy working at the school.

The school sits at the heart of the community. Parents and carers are positive about their children's experiences and recognise the nurturing environment that allows pupils to flourish academically, socially, and emotionally. Strong relationships between staff, families, and the

wider community enhance pupils' sense of belonging and contribute meaningfully to their overall development and success.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a well-planned, progressive programme that follows statutory guidance. This includes relationships, sex and health education and the early years framework. The personal development programme is enhanced through real-life experiences and regular visitors. These include professionals such as police officers, nurses, and firefighters linked to topics like 'people who help us.' Leaders consider carefully the school's local area and place strong emphasis on water safety, ensuring that pupils understand how to stay safe near the local canal.

Each lesson has clear ground rules, ensuring that staff explore sensitive topics safely while supporting pupils' individual needs. These may include bereavement or significant life events, which helps pupils feel secure and supported. Staff adapt lessons for pupils where necessary, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or other barriers to learning. They also use lessons to respond to emerging issues, such as friendships, often through high-quality reading texts.

The school values have recently been revised to focus on what pupils learn and can demonstrate. These incorporate fundamental British values, which staff embed through worship, curriculum content and inclusive resources. This promotes diversity and respect. However, pupils have limited opportunities to explore cultures within the wider community and develop a deeper understanding of diversity.

Leaders prioritise pupil wellbeing through a range of successful approaches. For example, every pupil has a trusted adult who builds a strong relationship with them. This adult supports pupils both personally and academically. Pupils learn how to identify and manage their feelings. They recognise and celebrate positive qualities in one another.

Pupils develop as responsible citizens through charity work such as supporting a local hospice and local food bank. This strengthens their understanding of social responsibility. Leaders plan opportunities to broaden the curriculum by going on trips, which enrich pupils' experiences and broaden their understanding of the wider world.

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

Pupils arrive at school every day to be greeted by a warm welcome from staff, who know them well. Pupils feel pleased to be at school because they enjoy their learning and seeing their friends. Children in the early years get off to a flying start. This sense of belonging supports pupils to attend regularly.

Pupils build positive relationships with staff. They know staff will help them if they have any problems or experience unkindness. However, this happens infrequently because pupils are typically kind to one another. Pupils feel safe at school and learn about their emotions, which helps them consider how their actions affect others.

Pupils concentrate well in lessons and participate in discussions. Learning is engaging and pupils achieve well. They remember key knowledge and can apply it to new contexts. In the early years, children immerse themselves in topics and stories, accessing a wide range of activities across the different areas of learning. Anyone who needs additional support receives it promptly and effectively. This prepares them for the next stage of their learning.

Pupils understand the school's values, which are rooted in the school's religious ethos. Pupils can explain them clearly, giving examples of how to demonstrate each one. Staff celebrate this weekly in assembly. Pupils take on leadership roles to develop confidence and self-esteem. Opportunities include roles such as kindness, spiritual, and green ambassadors. Pupils meet to identify priorities, share ideas and select the most popular options to take forward. These experiences broaden pupils' understanding of responsibility and teamwork. They listen to others and consider different viewpoints to help them make informed decisions. As a result, pupils feel valued and motivated to improve school life for everyone in their community. They consistently act with respect and kindness.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that all teachers make use of the agreed whole-school teaching strategies so that the ambitious curriculum is delivered effectively and consistently.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff have the expertise to enable pupils to access fully what is being taught in lessons and develop as confident and independent learners.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils develop their knowledge of different cultures in the wider community so that they gain a deeper understanding of diversity.
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About this inspection

The executive headteacher is Rebecca Roberts and the head of school is Lisa Freeman.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Elaine Bunn.

The school is part of a federation called Castle Church of England Federation.

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 HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, head of school, assistant headteacher, senior teachers, teachers, support staff, pupils and some parents during the inspection. They also spoke to representatives from the governing body, local authority and diocese.

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of St Albans. Its last section 48 inspection was in December 2021.

The school makes use of two registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher : Rebecca Roberts

Lead inspector:

Katie Devenport, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Carley Holliman, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

137

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)

4.39%

Well 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

2.92%

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

8.03%

Well below 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).

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)	4.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	2.7%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	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 (3 term)	7.1%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	1.0%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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