

Bishops Down Primary and Nursery School

Address: Rydal Drive, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 9SU

Unique reference number (URN): 118468

Inspection report: 31 March 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders take every opportunity to promote the importance of attending regularly. They work effectively to identify and remove any barriers before they become an issue for pupils or their families. This includes supporting pupils who join mid-year so they settle in well and sustain their attendance. Where required, leaders make sure that pupils with acute physical and/or medical needs receive high-quality support. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, have high attendance.

Pupils behave very well. Their attitudes to learning are commendable. Every morning, they walk into school with happy smiles and a respectful outlook, which flows into all areas of their learning. Staff implement the school's behaviour expectations and systems consistently. As a result, the atmosphere around classrooms and corridors is amiable. Transition times are orderly and pupils settle into lessons quickly. Pupils, as well as the youngest children, respond to adult requests politely.

Leaders have established an effective culture of fairness, inclusion and equality. They provide suitable support for any pupils who need help to manage their emotions. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying or harassment. Any incidents of derogatory language or unkindness are not tolerated and are dealt with swiftly.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a highly effective school culture where diversity is genuinely celebrated and every pupil is valued. Their decisions consistently prioritise pupils' best interests. For example, classroom spaces and corridors are purposefully designed so that, regardless of individual needs, pupils experience a deep sense of belonging and thrive in their learning. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and independence.

Leaders use an extremely well-honed, efficient and successful process to make sure pupils get the right support at the right time. They work closely with staff to ensure that the curriculum is adapted with precision. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those who attend the school's specialist resource provision for pupils with SEND make rapid progress from their individual starting points. Leaders check carefully that these pupils benefit from a personalised curriculum that prioritises communication skills and education, health and care plan targets effectively.

Leaders and staff collaborate efficiently with external professionals and pupils' families to secure high-quality provision. They monitor pupils' progress systematically and evaluate the impact of interventions to inform future planning.

Additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, is used appropriately to enhance access and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Where necessary, alternative provision is used effectively to address additional barriers.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education. Although small cohorts make year-on-year published data less reliable, national assessments show outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are in line with national averages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils also achieve well.

Pupils learn to read accurately and confidently. Staff identify gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge promptly and provide effective support, enabling pupils to catch up quickly. Pupils who need extra help with reading and communication catch up quickly because staff act early. Recent improvements to the mathematics curriculum are helping pupils to deepen their understanding. Teachers typically have high expectations for the quality of pupils' written work across the curriculum. However, sometimes, pupils do not use and apply their basic skills in spelling, writing and number well enough across the subjects they study.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious and interesting curriculum. It is thoughtfully arranged so that pupils build their knowledge coherently over time. Staff adapt the curriculum skilfully to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum that pupils learn in the specially resourced provision for pupils with physical disabilities is individualised and purposeful.

Leaders ensure that staff have the training, expertise and subject knowledge necessary to teach the curriculum well. Teachers adapt activities so that those with barriers to their learning, as well as pupils with SEND, can learn from the same curriculum alongside their peers. Typically, teachers check how well pupils understand what they have learned. For example, they encourage pupils to discuss their thinking before sharing ideas with the class using subject-specific vocabulary. However, occasionally, teachers do not correct misconceptions in some pupils' spelling, writing and number knowledge with sufficient precision. Where this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Since the last inspection, leaders have strengthened the teaching of phonics. This means that staff consistently check and make sure that pupils practise their early reading skills and knowledge. As a result, pupils are fluent and independent readers. For pupils who need it, staff provide timely and effective additional support with reading. This helps pupils to catch up quickly.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years curriculum is designed carefully. This ensures that children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, access learning in all areas effectively. Staff identify quickly any barriers to learning children may have. This includes any children with physical disabilities and those who join at different times in the year. They build nurturing relationships with children and respond sensitively to their individual needs. Where

required, leaders also work well with parents, carers and external professionals to ensure that children have the right help and support to make progress in their learning.

Typically, children learn well from the start and leave Reception well prepared for their future learning. There is a deliberate focus on building children's communication and language skills. Occasionally, staff miss opportunities to check and ensure that children, including in Nursery, embed their vocabulary and communication skills securely across all areas of learning.

Staff introduce children to phonics from the moment they join in Reception. They check carefully that children learn to use their phonics knowledge to read and write with growing confidence. Staff inspire children in Nursery Year to learn songs and rhymes as part of the curriculum routines.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders foster a close sense of community and shared purpose. Inclusion is a distinct strength here. Leaders have a razor-sharp understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They place pupils' best interests at the heart of their decisions. Where required, leaders engage proactively with other professionals and specialists when planning improvements and evaluating the impact of their work. This ensures that they remain focused on the priorities that will have a highly positive impact on pupils' education and wider school experiences.

Leaders ensure that all staff access a purposeful and high-quality programme for professional learning. Leaders use an evidence-informed approach to ensure that they sustain and coherently deliver this offer. Non-teaching staff receive an equally ambitious offer that is largely effective and tailored to develop their expertise in their specific areas of work. Leaders consider staff's wellbeing and workload carefully. For example, they make sure that staff have the time, support and resources they need to manage their responsibilities effectively. Staff understand leaders' strategic direction. They contribute to improvement, reflecting a culture of collective responsibility.

Governors understand their roles and statutory responsibilities well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders, particularly through their oversight of the school's in-house specialist resource provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers are typically very positive about the education and wider opportunities that the school offers their child.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school day and the curriculum are full of opportunities which promote pupils' personal development. For instance, in lessons and assemblies, pupils discuss topics such as equity, disability and individual liberty thoughtfully. They think carefully about themes such as fairness, kindness and how their actions affect others as well as the planet. Pupils talk maturely about differences and similarities between religious celebrations. Younger children learn to take turns, share resources and resolve minor conflicts with increasing maturity. Pupils show empathy towards others and develop a clear sense of positive citizenship.

Staff generally teach the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum well. Pupils learn about puberty, healthy relationships, friendships and how to look after their physical health. They know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when online. Pupils also learn about the jobs they can pursue in their future lives by working with a range of professionals such as artists, politicians, engineers and architects, who visit regularly. They develop social skills through responsibilities such as being school librarians, house captains and members of the school council. Leaders are making sure that pupils continually deepen their understanding in all areas of the PSHE curriculum.

Leaders ensure that pupils broaden their horizons through carefully considered trips and enrichment activities. Pupils have access to a wide range of clubs and activities in areas such as sports, arts and games. These are designed to support pupils' talents and interests. They also help them to develop new skills and work collaboratively with others. Pupils benefit from outdoor learning and from the rich local heritage through visits and community events. Leaders carefully track participation to ensure that every pupil is supported to access the full range of opportunities. This enables all pupils to benefit fully so that they are consistently well prepared for life beyond school.

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

Pupils enjoy their time at Bishops Down Primary and Nursery School. From the moment they enter this inclusive school, they experience a warm, happy and caring welcome. This is because staff develop positive relationships with pupils and their families. Parents and carers value greatly the support their children receive. One parent, summing up the views of many, said, 'We are delighted with the school. Leaders and staff are extremely approachable and patient with any questions and concerns.'

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are thoughtful, friendly and highly respectful. They work and play together with maturity. Older pupils set an excellent example for younger children. Incidents of bullying or discrimination are uncommon. Pupils are confident that staff will quickly help them deal with any concerns they may have. They feel safe and well cared for. Pupils' enjoyment of their school experiences is also reflected in their high attendance.

Children in the early years know that learning is important. They develop positive learning habits. For example, they maintain their concentration and listen to others during discussions.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND, including those in the school's specialist resource centre, are supported very well to access and succeed academically and in other areas of school life. Consequently, pupils show a passion for learning. They enthusiastically explore new ideas and work hard in lessons. When learning something tricky, pupils encourage and support each other and celebrate success. They leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, pursue their hobbies and interests in gardening, dancing and choir clubs. They relish their leadership roles as Rotarians, house captains, members of the school council and librarians.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers promptly identify and address key gaps in pupils' foundational skills of spelling, writing and number so that all pupils secure the basics, achieve highly across the curriculum and are consistently well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching is highly effective in the early years so that children develop their vocabulary and communication skills securely in all areas of learning and achieve as well as they could.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Freya Melkonian.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders and some staff. The lead inspector also met with the chair of governors and 3 governors during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke on the telephone with staff from the alternative provision and an officer from the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher : Laura Johnson

Lead inspector:

Shazia Akram, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Julie Prentice, Ofsted Inspector

Deborah Perkins, 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 31 March 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

200

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)

17.03%

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

5.00%

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

9.50%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

PD - Physical Disability

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	63%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	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	89%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	97%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

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	70%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	79%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	93%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	50%	46%	Close to average
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	80%	62%	Above
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	60%	59%	Close to average
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	70%	60%	Above
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	50%	68%	-18 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	80%	80%	0 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	60%	78%	-18 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	70%	80%	-10 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)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.5%	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)	8.0%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	10.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	21.1%	16.2%	Above

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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