

Shepherdswell Church of England Primary School

Address: Coldred Road, Shepherdswell, DOVER, Kent, CT15 7LH

Unique reference number (URN): 118691

Inspection report: 17 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 ●

The school's culture successfully promotes high standards of attendance and behaviour. Leaders emphasise the importance of regular attendance, and their work ensures it is consistently above national averages. The school has clear processes it follows to support pupils whose attendance needs to improve. Leaders monitor attendance closely and identify quickly when it becomes a concern. They work closely with families to ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend fully and benefit from the education provided. They take time to find out the reasons for absence and provide the right support, without lowering the expectation that pupils will attend.

Behaviour is calm and purposeful in every classroom. Routines are well embedded. This enables pupils to work individually and in pairs and small groups, contributing answers with confidence. Transition times between lessons are calm, reflecting pupils' clear understanding of expectations. Pupils want to behave well, often without needing further encouragement. Pupils know what constitutes bullying, and any issues are swiftly dealt with. Pupils develop warm, meaningful friendships. They appreciate the care and support provided by staff. The school is a positive place to learn, and pupils thrive.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a highly inclusive environment in which barriers to learning are identified swiftly and removed effectively. They have a detailed understanding of pupils, parents and the local community. As a result of the school's inclusive work, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged achieve well.

Staff's knowledge of their pupils is comprehensive. They are well trained to identify any emerging needs. Adaptations and strategies for individual pupils, including those with the most significant needs, are evident across the school. These are used effectively. They support pupils to work as independently as possible and be fully included in learning.

Leaders track pupils' progress carefully and monitor the impact of support and interventions. They use this information effectively to adjust learning plans, the focus of extra help and deployment of staff. Pupils who feel overwhelmed can use quiet spaces or a sensory circuits room. Leaders' support for disadvantaged pupils receiving pupil premium funding is matched to their specific needs. They ensure that pupils benefit from useful help and support, which is implemented consistently and understood by staff. This enables pupils to learn successfully and play an active part in the life of the school.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils make secure progress through the carefully designed and well-sequenced curriculum. By the end of key stage 2, pupils achieve well. This is reflected in published outcomes for reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also progress and achieve well. Across the curriculum, pupils largely produce high-quality work. In some subjects and year groups, they develop detailed knowledge that they speak about with confidence. However, at times, the depth of their knowledge can vary across subjects. Pupils' writing develops over time, improving in handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve the quality of phonics teaching. This action is having a positive impact on the standards that pupils achieve. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils acquire the key knowledge they need. Overall, pupils are ready for their next steps and are well prepared for secondary school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff across the school have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum, which is sequenced appropriately. Staff have identified the skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn at each stage. Pupils have clear opportunities to build on prior learning as they progress through the school.

Leaders have a focused approach to ensure that pupils secure strong foundations for learning. This enables most pupils to learn to read effectively and access the wider curriculum. The school prioritises reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils gain the essential skills and knowledge they need to progress. Assessment informs planning and teaching. Teachers typically check for understanding during lessons to address misconceptions. This ensures that pupils have secured the essential knowledge they need before moving on.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching in the school. The curriculum is generally taught well. Staff receive the training and support that they need to understand the subjects that they teach. Leaders' work to improve the teaching of phonics is clear. Where there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in different subjects and year groups, leaders have taken appropriate action so that all pupils make better progress through the curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that children in early years have a successful start to their education. They benefit from high-quality interactions with staff. This helps them to develop their language and vocabulary. Learning environments are language rich and well resourced. Leaders ensure that children have a wide range of equipment to use, which engages them in their learning. They have access to weekly forest school sessions that support physical

development and independence. Routines are well established, and attitudes to learning are highly positive. Children play and work together cooperatively and highly positively.

Leaders are knowledgeable about their early years provision. They have refined the curriculum to ensure it identifies and sequences the skills and knowledge children need from the start. A thorough transition programme ensures that staff know children well. They use this knowledge to carefully consider children's starting points and maximise opportunities to help them to make progress.

Phonics is generally taught well. Children who struggle to secure the most important skills that they need for their future learning receive effective targeted support as they move towards Year 1. As a result, children in the early years are typically well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school and community very well. They understand the school's priorities and areas for development clearly. They have redeveloped some parts of their curriculum and improved phonics teaching to better prepare pupils for their next steps in learning. Leaders involve and support staff to work together and take responsibility for ongoing improvements to the school. The vision and positive ethos of the school are ever present. Leaders and staff ensure their decisions are always made in the best interests of pupils.

Governors know the school well. They bring a range of experience and expertise that supports their work. They are knowledgeable about their roles. They ensure that their statutory duties are met. They are committed to removing barriers to learning so that all pupils can succeed. Governors work collaboratively with school leaders, providing support and challenge. This helps leaders remain focused on the right areas for development.

Leaders work effectively to engage with parents and carers. Staff foster positive relationships and provide opportunities for them to share their views. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school to help their children develop socially and academically. Professional development and training for staff are well considered to support individuals and whole-school improvement. Staff access specific training linked to their subjects and pupils' needs. Staff are very proud to work at the school. Leaders ensure that wellbeing and workload are carefully considered. Leaders are determined to provide pupils with a positive school experience that ensures they are well prepared for their future lives.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. They provide a structured programme of taught lessons alongside wider opportunities and experiences. Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of right and wrong and the importance of kindness. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure the relationship and sex education programme meets statutory requirements and responds to pupils' needs. Teachers support pupils' understanding of healthy relationships and personal safety effectively. This helps pupils understand risks to their wellbeing, both online and offline. The school's approach helps pupils to develop the

knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in modern Britain. The programme is underpinned by the school's values of 'love, gratitude, justice and determination'.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is comprehensive. Older pupils speak confidently about the rule of law and respecting others. Pupils know how to treat others fairly, including those who may be different from them. Pupils' physical health is prioritised. All pupils have access to forest school activities. Leaders have focused on developing outdoor play from the early years. This leads to very active and harmonious breaktimes with pupils playing very well together.

Pastoral support is caring and nurturing. There is a focus on pupils' wellbeing throughout the school day. Leaders have developed their behaviour and relationships policy to ensure it supports the needs of all pupils. Pupils have a range of meaningful leadership roles, such as school councillor, worship leaders and school librarians. Residential visits, themed days, music and sporting activities broaden pupils' horizons. They promote resilience and cooperation. Pupils celebrate their participation in this wide range of opportunities on offer. Leaders ensure all pupils have access to the enrichment activities.

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

Pupils are proud to be part of their caring school community and enjoy attending every day. Friendly leaders and staff who know the pupils well welcome them in each morning. Pupils' voices are heard, and they feel a deep sense of belonging in this highly inclusive school. Relationships between all members of the school are warm and respectful. Bullying is rare and dealt with promptly if it does happen. Pupils know who they can speak to if they have concerns. This helps them feel safe and valued at school.

Pupils generally achieve well during their time at school. They enjoy learning, and the school celebrates their achievements. They benefit from a carefully considered, broad and enriching curriculum. This is taught well in most subjects and equips them with the knowledge and skills they need. There are a range of exciting activities available to all pupils. These trips and activities enhance the curriculum and develop pupils' talents and interests successfully. The school's inclusive culture and practice ensures that pupils who need extra support benefit fully from all that the school has to offer.

Behaviour across the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils benefit from effective support to understand their emotions and behaviour if it is required. They build and demonstrate confidence, teamwork and independence during their time at school. Social times are a celebration of pupils collaborating and demonstrating the school's values. Pupils have secure social and moral understanding. They contribute actively to the work of the school. They enjoy helping others and take immense pride in their responsibilities around the school.

Pupils are prepared well for their future as a result of the school's work. Leaders are determined to fulfil their vision to be an 'excellent school where everyone can flourish and grow'.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure their work to improve the quality and effectiveness of phonics teaching is sustained and leads to consistently secure outcomes for pupils.
 - Leaders should continue to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching across subjects and year groups so that pupils achieve similarly high standards across the curriculum.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Kerry Bardsley.

This school is part of a federation called The Federation of Shepherdswell Church of England and Eythorne Elvington Community 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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of governors and members of the governing body.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mark Lamb

Lead inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Aaron Caple, Ofsted Inspector

Liz McIntosh, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

207

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)

16.43%

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

1.45%

Below 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

13.53%

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

Above 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	85%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	60%	Above

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	91%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	89%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	93%	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	89%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	86%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	94%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	71%	Above

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	94%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	96%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	94%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	93%	73%	Above

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	82%	46%	Above
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	91%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	82%	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	91%	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	82%	68%	14 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	91%	80%	11 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	82%	78%	4 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	91%	80%	11 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)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.8%	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 (2 term)	9.2%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.1%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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