

Higher Walton Church of England Primary School

Address: Rosewood Avenue, Higher Walton, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 4FE

Unique reference number (URN): 119393

Inspection report: 6 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.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have established a well-designed curriculum that is ambitious and relevant to the pupils at the school. They clearly identify and sequence the important knowledge and key vocabulary that pupils need to learn. This helps pupils to make progress through the curriculum and talk confidently about their learning.

Staff receive effective training. This helps them to teach with confidence. They typically deliver lessons well and regularly check what pupils know and remember. This helps pupils to make progress.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to learn with their classmates. Staff provide additional support and adapt activities, when needed, so that these pupils learn well.

Staff in early years and key stage 1 prioritise early reading, writing and mathematics. They teach phonics consistently well, enabling pupils to secure essential skills quickly. However, not all pupils in key stage 2 have benefited from this effective start. Some older pupils have gaps in their writing knowledge. They remain at an early stage of writing and do not write fluently, which hinders the quality of their work. Leaders have begun to take the right steps to address this issue, although improvements are at a relatively early stage.

Early years

Expected standard

Staff ensure that children benefit from a well-designed environment that nurtures children's curiosity across all areas of learning. The curriculum is carefully sequenced to support all aspects of their development. For many children, this is personalised due to the small cohorts and interests of Nursery-age children.

High-quality interactions encourage children to be inquisitive. As a result, children develop a rich vocabulary. Phonics is taught consistently well. This helps children to improve their reading fluency. Staff also focus on early writing and mathematical skills. Children are taught how to form letters correctly and are proud of their written work across the curriculum, for example being able to write about what seeds need in order to grow.

Typically, children are ready for the next steps in their education. Staff adapt activities effectively so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make appropriate progress from their starting points.

The way that staff care for children ensures that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Children are encouraged to be independent and have high levels of concentration and resilience in their learning. Positive partnerships with parents and carers further enhance children's learning. Families are well equipped to support their children's progress through the frequent meetings and workshops that the school organises.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a culture in which they welcome and support pupils with a range of needs to succeed, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders ensure that staff provide effective support to help pupils learn. Teachers adapt activities thoughtfully and, when appropriate, deliver programmes to meet pupils' individual needs.

Pupils with SEND generally achieve well from their starting points. Staff use their knowledge and skills to teach pupils with SEND effectively. When needed, staff follow guidance from specialists and help pupils to learn alongside their peers.

Leaders provide effective pastoral support for pupils. They offer sessions that build resilience, particularly for pupils who find independent learning challenging. Leaders engage specialist counsellors to provide additional support for those who need it most.

Disadvantaged pupils are generally well supported in school. Leaders use additional funding appropriately to achieve this. They provide targeted support for pupils' learning and check that these pupils are able to join in all of the activities that the school offers. Nevertheless, at times, leaders do not evaluate the impact of this support with enough precision. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress they could, particularly where gaps in learning remain unaddressed.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for the wellbeing and academic progress of pupils. Leaders and governors fully understand the context of the school. They know pupils and families well and the barriers that some face. Leaders identify appropriate priorities for the school and take action to make necessary improvements. As a result, the school has improved in several areas since the last inspection, including pupils' behaviour and personal development. However, leaders know that further work needs to be done to reduce pupils' absence rates and to raise achievement in writing. They are taking steps to make these important improvements.

Governors fulfil their roles and statutory duties effectively, making positive use of the training that they undertake. They keep an up-to-date and accurate oversight of the school and understand the strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors provide support and challenge to leaders, in particular in terms of the impact that resources have on pupils' learning. They check how leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, so that it helps to reduce these pupils' barriers to learning.

Staff value the professional development that leaders provide. This has led to improved teaching across the school, along with leaders' effective use of external support. Staff are confident in meeting the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders consider the wellbeing and workload of staff, when making decisions. As a result, staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders foster positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Staff teach the personal, social, health and economic curriculum effectively, ensuring that pupils understand how to keep themselves happy and healthy. Pupils learn about online safety, including the potential risks associated with artificial intelligence. Over time, pupils learn to recognise and develop healthy relationships. Older pupils attend an annual event organised by local emergency services. This strengthens their understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Pupils understand fundamental British values and are well prepared for living in a diverse and modern Britain. Pupils show respect for difference and demonstrate genuine care and empathy for others. They value the opportunity to take on leadership responsibilities, such as prefects, eco-leaders and wellbeing leaders. Pupils contribute positively to school life and the wider community.

Staff encourage pupils to share concerns with trusted adults and provide 'worry boxes' as an additional means of seeking support. Leaders promote the school's motto, 'ready, respect, safe', which helps pupils to learn and interact in a calm, positive and secure environment. As a result, pupils flourish.

Pupils take part in a wide range of clubs, such as in choir and gardening. This helps them to develop their interests and to learn new skills. Pupils enjoy representing the school at various events, such as crown green bowls and boccia. Leaders organise visits to local places of interest to support pupils' learning, such as to the local church, park and town. They provide a range of opportunities for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Leaders also target some opportunities specifically for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including specialist sporting events.

Pupils are given opportunities to learn about future employment opportunities. For example, they talk positively about science days at the local university and engineering projects that they have been involved in.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. At the end of key stage 2, pupils achieve less well in writing than in reading and mathematics. Leaders have taken action to secure consistently effective teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This has led to clear improvements in pupils' achievement, particularly in early years and key stage 1. Pupils talk confidently about their learning and use their phonics knowledge accurately to support fluent reading. However, too many older pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have gaps in their writing knowledge. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to address this, but this has not had sufficient impact.

Pupils typically achieve well across the wider curriculum. They use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and recall prior learning effectively. Pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities typically achieve well from their starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Over time, attendance has been below national averages. Too many disadvantaged pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on learning all that they should. Attendance among pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below national averages. Leaders monitor attendance closely and analyse patterns of absence. They use a range of strategies to improve attendance and work with pupils, parents and carers to reduce barriers. However, these actions have not secured sustained improvements in overall rates of pupils' attendance.

Pupils behave well in school and play cooperatively together. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger pupils. Leaders and staff set high expectations for behaviour and support pupils to manage their emotions effectively. Pupils respond well to the reward systems in place and understand the school's rules. When concerns arise, staff apply clear and consistent approaches that pupils recognise. Leaders use suspensions appropriately and the rates of suspensions have reduced significantly over the last 3 years. Bullying occurs very rarely and staff address it promptly and effectively. Pupils respect and care for each other. They treat each other equally. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and engage enthusiastically with activities.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this nurturing school. Staff warmly welcome them each morning and build caring relationships. As a result, pupils feel safe and trust staff.

Pupils behave well and consistently meet staff's high expectations. Leaders have established a culture of respect, where pupils value one another. Older pupils act as positive role models and enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as 'buddies' and 'play leaders'. On the very rare occasion that bullying occurs, staff deal with it appropriately. Rules and routines are firmly in place. This creates a calm environment for pupils to learn and play in.

Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Older pupils did not benefit from the positive start that younger pupils now receive. As a result, some have gaps in their learning. These gaps mean that some pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the next stage in their education. In addition, some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they miss out on important learning.

Children in the early years settle quickly into school life. Staff build positive relationships with them, which supports their confidence and wellbeing. Leaders organise the curriculum to help pupils to build on what they already know and can do. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that lessons are interesting. Teachers adapt their teaching during lessons when needed. They use their training effectively to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, many pupils with SEND make steady progress from their starting points.

Pupils enjoy the many and varied opportunities that leaders organise for them to broaden their experiences. Leaders ensure that all pupils can participate in trips, such as visits to the zoo and theatre as well as clubs, including rounders and crochet.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to improve attendance, including for pupils who are disadvantaged, so that pupils attend school regularly.
 - Leaders should further improve the effectiveness of the teaching of writing across key stage 2, so that pupils' attainment rises and pupils achieve as well as they can.
 - Leaders should sharpen their monitoring of the impact of provision on disadvantaged pupils so that gaps in these pupils' knowledge are closed further.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Alison Moxham.

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, other school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. They also met with representatives of the governing body, the local authority and the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Vicki Clarke

Lead inspector:

Kathryn Pym, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Sarah Midgley, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

97

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

119

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)

29.35%

Close to 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

7.22%

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

13.40%

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	45%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	36%	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	66%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	62%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	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
Latest 3 year average	59%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	62%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	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	66%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	14%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	50%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	29%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	43%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	14%	68%	-53 pp
2024/25 (final)	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	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	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	29%	78%	-49 pp
2024/25 (final)	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	43%	80%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	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 (3 term)	6.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.1%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.2%	5.9%	Above

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)	20.0%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	17.5%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	20.2%	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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