

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Address: St Nicholas Road, Church, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 4DN

Unique reference number (URN): 119447

Inspection report: 24 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

From the early years onwards, pupils, including those who face barriers to learning, secure basic skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make steady progress through the curriculum and achieve outcomes in national tests that are in line with what is typical across the country.

Pupils' work in books is well presented and matches the curriculum that leaders have set out. Teachers provide suitable adaptations that help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve and make progress from their starting points. Leaders recognise that the most able learners would benefit from deepening their understanding. Steps have been taken to address this. From an early age, pupils articulate their learning with confidence and enthusiasm. For example, older pupils explained how their electricity topic in science led them to debate the advantages of sustainable energy versus fossil fuels.

Overall, pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders take a proactive approach to attendance, working closely with families to identify and address barriers. By monitoring attendance patterns closely, leaders intervene early where concerns arise. They tailor support to individuals, particularly vulnerable pupils and those who face other challenges. As a result, attendance is consistently in line with national levels.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils benefit from behaviour systems built on strong relationships with staff. Recent changes to the behaviour policy have strengthened these systems and ensured that everyone understands what is expected. Pupils recognise how the new system helps them and others make positive choices.

Pupils are welcoming and polite. In lessons, they listen with curiosity. Leaders have already spotted that, occasionally, weaknesses in teaching can lead to pupils becoming distracted, particularly those who are most able. Work on this is ongoing. From a young age, pupils show kind and caring attitudes towards one another. Leaders have created a calm and orderly environment where pupils move sensibly around corridors and play positively in the playground. Pupils engage confidently with visitors and are keen to talk about their learning and experiences, reflecting a culture of courtesy and respect. Pupils trust adults to resolve any concerns quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum is embedded across the school. The key knowledge and skills that pupils should learn at each stage and in each subject are clearly identified. There is a sharp focus on communication, language, reading and vocabulary. Pupils who struggle in these areas receive effective support to help them

catch up quickly. Teaching across the school consistently matches the content that leaders intend.

Leaders ensure that staff receive relevant, high-quality training. Staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge across all year groups. Typically, staff set high expectations, explain concepts clearly and use effective modelling. However, from time to time, there is variability in how well tasks are designed and explained. Where this is weaker, leaders have identified that learning opportunities are not maximised and pupils do not make the best possible progress.

Leaders make carefully considered decisions about how to use staff effectively to support learning for the most vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff have a clear understanding of these pupils' needs. They provide effective adjustments, such as pre-teaching, movement breaks and adapted resources. This helps these pupils access the same curriculum as their peers and make progress.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have successfully driven improvements in both the learning environment and the curriculum in the early years. Leaders and staff establish effective partnerships with parents and carers so that children in Reception feel safe, happy and ready to learn. Staff deliver a curriculum that prioritises children's communication and language development. Staff seize opportunities to engage children in vocabulary-rich conversation. Typically, children are curious and eager to learn. They demonstrate strong perseverance and focus, showing resilience when faced with challenges such as joining materials together when making 'junk models'.

Children start to form a love of reading in Reception. They enjoy listening to a range of stories, rhymes and poems. This helps to prepare them for learning phonics. Learning activities are thoughtfully designed to promote independence and collaboration, supporting children's understanding of the world and physical skills. Children enhance and consolidate their knowledge through incidental learning opportunities, such as numbers on the toilet doors or counting how many sleeps until the next birthday. Leaders' work to strengthen the level of challenge for the most able children is ongoing. Children are confident, readily interacting with visitors and talking about their learning. Children are typically well prepared for their learning in key stage 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders show unwavering commitment to inclusion. They are continually responsive to their changing context. They adapt provision to meet the wide range of needs, including special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), that pupils join with. These needs are identified quickly and accurately, following a clear approach with parents involved at every stage of the process.

When necessary, leaders work in partnership with external experts to design appropriate support for pupils with SEND and those who face other barriers to learning. Staff receive the training and information they need to support pupils' needs appropriately. Leaders routinely check the impact of the support they provide for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with

SEND. When aspects of the provision are not working, leaders make the necessary adjustments.

Leaders tailor their approaches to support disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding is spent wisely to help these pupils thrive in their education. Leaders also make sure that disadvantaged pupils take part in enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities provided at the school. As a result, disadvantaged pupils benefit from all aspects of school. This includes achieving as well as their peers.

Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately. Leaders maintain accountability for the education, safety and wellbeing of any pupils who learn elsewhere.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are determined that the school's socioeconomic context does not limit pupils' aspirations. As a result, pupils thrive on the daily diet of nurture, tolerance and high expectations provided by staff. This drives pupils' learning, achievement and wellbeing forward. Leaders choose their priorities deliberately. For example, they have managed recent staffing challenges effectively, ensuring that any impact on pupils has been minimal.

Subject and phase leaders are knowledgeable and proactive. They are committed to making sure that pupils, including those who find learning difficult, achieve well. Overall, staff appreciate the support senior leaders give them to develop professionally. Staff receive high-quality training that gives them the knowledge and expertise they need to carry out their roles. Staff say their wellbeing is always considered and that leaders listen to their views. Leaders are mindful of additional workload when introducing new initiatives.

Governors are proud of the school. They work collaboratively with school leaders to monitor achievement and plan improvements. Governors fully support staff and leaders' wellbeing and workload, while also providing appropriate challenge to hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.

The school's relationships with families are positive and built on trust. Parents and carers, including those of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enthusiastically praise school leaders and staff. Parents say that they always feel welcome and that nothing is too much trouble for staff.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a coherent and well-designed programme of personal development. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know how to spot danger online and avoid risks. From the early years onwards, pupils learn about the concept of consent and what makes a good friend. Older pupils confidently pick out the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Through their religious education curriculum, pupils develop an understanding of religions and cultures beyond their own. For example, they compare the harvest festival to Sukkot, or Lent to Ramadan. Pupils respect people's differences. They welcome everyone to their

school. Leaders actively encourage pupils to become responsible global citizens. Pupils are encouraged to become 'agents of change' through the school's sustainability projects.

Pastoral support is carefully attuned to the needs of families. The school's nurturing ethos ensures that parents and carers feel supported and valued and are comfortable seeking help if they need it. Leaders work closely with external agencies to create a package of support when needed.

Pupils talk excitedly about the numerous trips and visits they have experienced, such as going to a local mill and an eco-train station. Forest school sessions, residential visits to an outdoor pursuit centre and regular visits to the cinema help to bring the curriculum to life. Leaders think carefully about how visiting speakers can broaden pupils' horizons and motivate them. Recent examples include an Olympic hockey player who spoke about living with anxiety and a visually impaired footballer.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs the school offers, such as football, curling and archery. These help to nurture pupils' talents and feed their ambitions. Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils who face disadvantages access these clubs regularly and represent the school in competitions.

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

This school's motto comes to life in daily practice. Pupils here are accepted, loved and helped to understand their worth and potential. Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff into the school yard each morning. Staff know each pupil's needs and ensure that they feel safe and valued. Pupils feel a sense of belonging. They know who to talk to if they are worried. They are confident that adults will deal with any concerns well. Bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly if it happens.

Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and to each other. From the early years onwards, showing kindness and caring behaviour is the norm. Pupils approach learning with curiosity and talk positively about their lessons. Pupils attend regularly, reflecting their enjoyment of school and their strong sense of belonging.

Pupils, including those who face barriers to learning, live up to the high expectations leaders set for them. Children in the early years make a confident start to their education. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum and are fully prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who face other disadvantages, are supported by skilled staff. This ensures that they make progress from their starting points.

Pupils benefit from a wide-ranging personal development and wellbeing offer. Pupils take on leadership roles, such as being members of the school parliament and worship leaders. Pupils can define key aspects of fundamental British values and understand the importance of valuing differences and cultural diversity. Older pupils act as role models to younger ones, engaging them in activities at playtime and walking with them to church. These experiences

contribute positively to pupils' sense of responsibility and help prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should support staff to consistently make highly effective decisions about how to teach the curriculum, ensuring that tasks are designed to fully engage pupils and maximise their learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well across all key stages to maximise learning opportunities, particularly for pupils with higher prior attainment.
-

About this inspection

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 senior leaders and staff. They also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their experiences of school.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2022.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Peter Blackburn.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection was in October 2024.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Ruth Moran, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Thomas Fay, Ofsted Inspector

Nicky Parkinson, 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 24 March 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

191

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)

36.13%

Above 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

4.19%

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

23.56%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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	66%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	68%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	86%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	91%	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	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	91%	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	59%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	43%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	44%	Above

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	66%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	43%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	61%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	60%	Above

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	72%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	43%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	72%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	100%	58%	Above

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	72%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	57%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	59%	Above

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	59%	68%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	66%	34 pp

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	66%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	81%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	61%	80%	-19 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	78%	22 pp

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	72%	78%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	78%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	72%	78%	-5 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	77%	23 pp

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	72%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	100%	79%	21 pp

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)	6.0%	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)	10.9%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.9%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright