

Brindle St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address: Water Street, Brindle, Chorley, Lancashire, PR6 8NH

Unique reference number (URN): 119462

Inspection report: 23 June 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 ●

Pupils love attending school. Rates of attendance are well above the national average and have been over time. Even so, leaders are vigilant about identifying and removing any barriers that might prevent pupils from attending regularly. In this small school, leaders know pupils and their families incredibly well. Bespoke support is put into place, when needed, to ensure that attendance remains high.

For pupils in this school, excellent behaviour and dedication to learning is the norm. This is not by chance. Leaders ensure that all staff share the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour. On the rare occasions when those expectations are not met, leaders place a firm emphasis on helping pupils to reflect on what went wrong. Consequently, pupils quickly learn to amend their own behaviour and to make positive choices. Older pupils, both in the school and within each mixed-age class, are expected to be role models for younger pupils. They delight in rising to this challenge by modelling exceedingly positive attitudes to learning and behaving with consideration for others. Even the very youngest children show a remarkable ability to work independently. In this culture of care and kindness, bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with. Pupils blossom into confident, caring and considerate young people.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children thrive under the expert guidance of staff in the early years provision. The culture of care that exists throughout the school begins there. Warm and trusting relationships with staff mean that the youngest children quickly feel happy and at ease. This provides a firm foundation from which staff support children to become increasingly confident and independent. Throughout each academic year, leaders thoughtfully adapt the provision to account for children's changing needs and growing independence.

Leaders have meticulously crafted a curriculum that precisely identifies what children of different ages should know and be able to do. This includes important foundational knowledge, such as phonics, number and early handwriting. Children are well supported to quickly secure the basics in these areas. Over time, they apply and embed this knowledge with confidence and fluency.

Staff have a thorough understanding of children's starting points and carefully design tasks that take these into account. Staff engage children in consistently high-quality interactions, which further develop children's vocabulary and understanding. Any additional needs or barriers that might hinder children from learning are swiftly identified and expertly addressed. As a result, children progress through the curriculum successfully. They acquire the knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to learning that they need to get off to a flying start in Year 1.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Over time, pupils' attainment in tests at the end of key stage 2 has been at least in line with national averages, and often higher. Their attainment in reading is particularly impressive. These positive outcomes are reflected in how successfully pupils of all ages acquire secure knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils, including those with any barriers to their learning or wellbeing, typically build a rich body of knowledge in each subject. However, at times, when the curriculum is less precise about what pupils of different ages should learn, there is some variability in how securely pupils build their understanding in key stages 1 and 2. This is not the case in the early years, where children are incredibly well prepared for future learning in all areas.

Leaders have recently taken action to embed oracy through the curriculum. The positive impact of this work is apparent in the way that pupils of all ages articulate their understanding with increasing confidence and eloquence.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They have given careful thought to how to organise the curriculum logically for mixed-age classes. In the main, the curriculum precisely identifies what pupils should learn. This is particularly explicit in the early years. However, in a couple of subjects in key stages 1 and 2, there is less clarity about what pupils of different ages should know and be able to do. On occasion, this hinders staff from designing learning activities that enable pupils with different starting points to secure and deepen their knowledge as successfully as they could.

Drawing on their thorough understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching, leaders provide suitable training so that staff have the expertise to teach well. Staff use their secure subject knowledge to explain difficult concepts clearly. They regularly check pupils' understanding and take swift action to resolve any muddled thinking. Typically, staff use appropriate strategies to support the small number of pupils with any barriers to their learning or wellbeing. As a result, these pupils learn successfully alongside their peers.

Staff are quick to identify any pupils who fall behind in reading, writing or mathematics. These pupils benefit from additional help from well-trained staff.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

A deep sense of belonging permeates the school. Pupils are well known and cared for. Despite having small proportions of pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders are alert to spotting any potential vulnerabilities that might affect pupils' learning or wellbeing. For instance, some pupils attend wellbeing sessions that help to build their resilience and self-esteem.

Suitable systems are in place to ensure that any needs or barriers to learning that pupils may have are identified early. Staff typically make good use of their thorough knowledge of each pupil to provide carefully tailored support to those who need extra help. Leaders have recently strengthened their approach to reviewing the impact of the support that pupils receive. This helps leaders to act swiftly to adapt and refine the strategies that are in place for individual pupils. As a result, any barriers to pupils' learning or wellbeing are typically reduced well. In the early years, the consistently high-quality support that children receive is particularly effective in helping them to overcome any barriers to their success.

Leaders work closely with pupils' families, as well as with external professionals, to ensure that pupils have the support that they need.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Pupils' best interests are at the heart of leaders' vision to provide a high-quality education for all. Although the school does not have a high proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders ensure that the needs of these pupils remain central to their decision-making. Leaders have successfully established a culture in which pupils feel well known, well cared for and happy.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have a keen understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that would benefit from further refinement. They have thought carefully about both the challenges and the opportunities arising from teaching mixed-age classes and have taken suitable action to continue to improve the provision accordingly. Leaders prioritise ensuring that staff have the expertise and the support that they need to teach well in this context. To this end, staff benefit from a thorough programme of professional development. The positive impact of this work is most consistently evident in the early years.

Staff are overwhelmingly proud to be part of this school family. Many staff have numerous responsibilities and they appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload. For instance, staff benefit from dedicated subject leadership time.

Parents and carers are exceedingly positive about the experiences that their children have in the school. Parents feel part of the school community and value the communication with staff that enables them to work together to support their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have carefully designed a programme of personal development that helps pupils to learn how to stay safe in their local area, as well as broadening their understanding of the world beyond. For instance, pupils know how to behave safely around water and railways, and they learn about different faiths and beliefs. This learning is enhanced through trips, for example, to different places of worship.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is comprehensive. In the main, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the information that they need to be fully prepared for life in modern society. This includes knowing about healthy relationships and the fundamental British values. Some of this important knowledge is

reinforced through weekly sessions in which pupils of all ages come together in their house groups to discuss their PSHE learning. Older pupils often take the lead in these sessions. They promote tolerance, respect and kindness and celebrate examples of their peers demonstrating these attributes.

Pupils particularly benefit from opportunities to assume the mantle of leadership. They embrace roles where they can help others, for example as 'mindful minis' who ensure that everyone feels included at breaktime, or by serving on the school council. When pupils request new equipment, leaders encourage them to take the lead in fundraising activities. For instance, the school council organised a 'bake-off' competition to raise money to buy new aprons for the cooking club. In this way, pupils develop confidence and resilience as they learn how to work with others to achieve change in the community.

Leaders use their comprehensive knowledge of each pupil to ensure that they get the support that they need to be successful in school. When necessary, leaders remove any barriers to pupils participating in all that the school offers so that everyone benefits from these opportunities.

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

This is a small school with a big heart. Pupils come running through the gates each morning, eager to find out what the day has in store. They are keen to attend every day because they do not want to miss out on learning or on the wealth of opportunities available to them. Whether they are clog dancing, enjoying a visit from the local MP, learning in the outdoor area or attending residential trips, pupils participate with enthusiasm and appreciation. Older pupils reflect warmly on the happy memories that they create during their time in school.

Pupils are well cared for. They trust the staff to help them with any worries that they might have. Pupils become positive role models for each other. Both across the school and within the mixed-age classes, older pupils take great pride in supporting their younger peers. Pupils value kindness and friendship. They are quick to notice when others demonstrate these attributes and to celebrate this by writing a note of recognition that is displayed for all to see. In this nurturing context, where older pupils readily play with and care for the youngest children, pupils are unencumbered by worries about bullying.

Starting in the early years, children develop a curiosity about the world and take pride in their learning. Pupils throughout the school apply themselves with quiet diligence during lessons, so that classrooms are an oasis of calm. Pupils typically benefit from a thoughtfully-designed curriculum that is taught well. In the main, staff are adept at reducing any barriers to pupils' learning or wellbeing. As a result, most pupils achieve highly. Children in the early years are particularly well prepared for the demands of Year 1. Expert staff use their thorough knowledge of each child to carefully tailor learning so that these children flourish.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that staff have clarity about what pupils of different ages should know and remember in every subject, so that they can use this information to design learning activities that take full account of pupils' starting points. This is to enable pupils to embed and deepen their knowledge in each subject.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Dr Kathy Whyte.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority, representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors, and representatives of the Diocese of Blackburn.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

At the time of this inspection, there was an acting headteacher leading the school, Matthew Draper. He has held this post since November 2025.

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Blackburn. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in June 2025.

Since the last inspection, the school has opened a nursery for 3-year-old children.

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Tracy Austin

Lead inspector:

Sally Rix, His Majesty's Inspector

Team 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 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

70

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

70

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)

1.43%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.86%

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

2.86%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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)

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 (final)	75%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	91%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	92%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	90%	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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	81%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23		58%	

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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23		59%	

‘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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23		66%	

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%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23		79%	

‘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)	2.8%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	2.7%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.4%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	3.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	1.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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

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