

St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Address: Withers Street, Blackburn, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 1DF

Unique reference number (URN): 119505

Inspection report: 6 January 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Through close monitoring and analysis, leaders have improved attendance year on year to ensure that it is now in line with or above national averages. Staff sustain this by identifying barriers to pupils' attendance and intervening swiftly to remove them. Positive pastoral relationships mean that reasonable adjustments are made, where necessary, for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing other barriers. As a result, absence is minimised.

Following a successful re-set of the school's behaviour policy, leaders have established high expectations and have embedded an effective behaviour system that is well understood by staff and pupils. Clear rules and routines are followed. Staff act as role models while reinforcing high standards and pupils are celebrated for displaying traits of their school values, such as courage and respect. Disruption to learning and bullying are not tolerated. Trusting relationships with staff mean that pupils, including those with barriers to learning, use their voices if they sense anything is wrong or unjust. Pupils are friendly and courteous. There is scope for pupils to develop their self-discipline but, on the whole, they move around the school sensibly and engage fully in their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is generally well structured and ambitious, with clear progression and end points in each subject that build on prior learning. Leaders are strengthening their approach to curriculum monitoring so that they can identify areas for development with greater precision and act on them more swiftly.

Leaders ensure that staff have, or develop, the knowledge and skills required for the subjects and phases they teach. Staff generally have the appropriate expertise to deliver the curriculum well. They design exciting lessons and explain content clearly, using a suitable approach for the phase they are teaching. The curriculum extends pupils' vocabulary effectively. However, on occasion, staff do not model spoken language well. All pupils at the early stages of learning to read are taught systematically using a synthetic phonics scheme. Overall, assessment is used well to check understanding and retrieval practise sessions help pupils to remember what they have learned.

Work is ongoing to refine the support and adaptations provided for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers. Staff know pupils well, and leaders are developing the consistency and purposefulness of interventions. This is helping to ensure that these pupils are better supported to achieve and catch up securely.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school provides a broad and coherent programme of personal development that pupils, including those with barriers to learning, benefit from. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. They are taught about relationships, consent and how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils are keen to improve their physical activity and enjoy

wearing digital fitness bands as part of a collaborative effort with staff to monitor and improve activity levels.

The positive interfaith relationships that are modelled throughout their school community help pupils to understand and respect people's differences. This diverse community poses its own challenges, which leaders continue to address sensitively. Pupils understand and demonstrate fundamental British values. They are proud to take on roles of responsibility in school, such as play leaders and school councillors, and they participate actively in their community. For example, the school choir performs at the local supermarket and older pupils arrange coffee mornings to raise money for charity. These opportunities help to develop pupils' self-confidence and enhance their social skills.

Leaders are committed to providing pupils with experiences and opportunities that deepen their learning, broaden their horizons and nurture their individual talents. A wide range of enrichment activities extends learning beyond the classroom. Trips to local castles and science centres bring their curriculum to life. Pupils speak positively about the many clubs, visits and hands-on learning experiences on offer. For example, they recalled their science and rock music workshops that were part of a 'super learning week' with enthusiasm. The vast majority of pupils attend clubs and enjoy them. Leaders have listened to pupil voice and are currently exploring some more creative and artistic clubs. Pupils, parents and carers value the school's efforts to ensure these opportunities are financially accessible to all.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

While many pupils achieve well, a significant number do not attain outcomes in key stage 2 that match national averages. These pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education in secondary school.

Similarly, too many children leave Reception without the secure foundations that they need for Year 1. Many children start school with little or no English. While leaders embrace their diverse community, they do not address sufficiently their barriers to learning. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders' recent actions to renew the curriculum for reading is showing signs of raising achievement, but this is at an early stage. Pupils' work in books shows that leaders' actions are having impact. An increasing number of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are progressing through the curriculum as leaders intend.

Early years

Needs attention 

Delivery of the early years curriculum is inconsistent. Sometimes, delivery is high quality, purposeful and thorough, at other times less so. Expectations of what children can do also varies. For example, some areas of learning are sharply focused on developing language, vocabulary and independence, while others are unnecessarily scaffolded. When this occurs, it hinders learning.

Leaders have designed and implemented an appropriate curriculum that covers the necessary areas of learning in the Reception Year. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing children's communication, language and early reading skills. Staff generally deliver phonics sessions effectively, but those children who struggle with reading do not receive the rigorous, rapid catch up intervention that they need. As a result, children's preparation for Year 1 is varied.

Staff form warm relationships with children. They work closely with the nursery school on site to ensure that children have a smooth transition into the Reception Year. Children arrive at school happy and feel safe in their environment. Several children demonstrate growing independence, for example putting their own coats on and finding resources. Parents and carers value the relationships that they have with school staff and appreciate the opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Although leaders recognise the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who face other barriers, they are too slow to determine the precise support required for each pupil and to put effective provision into place. Nurture classes provide the personal support and care that some pupils need to maintain their wellbeing, but academic expectations in these classes vary widely. Throughout school, some adaptations to learning are successful and delivered by well-trained staff. Others lack focus and clarity. Recent staffing changes have made it difficult for leaders to ensure that all colleagues supporting pupils with SEND receive the training they need to carry out their roles effectively. Leaders monitor the progress of some vulnerable pupils and review the impact of interventions, but this is not carried out consistently across the school. Where checking of pupil performance is weak or unreliable, pupils' progress is not assured. This includes checking that pupils who are eligible for pupil premium are getting the support that they need.

Staff have a sound understanding of the approach used to identify pupils with additional needs. Leaders collaborate effectively with external agencies, such as children's social care and the virtual school so that they support vulnerable families successfully. Leaders keep up to date with training and local partnership strategies.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders' actions to tackle low attainment in all phases has lacked the precision needed to bring about rapid improvements. Leaders are self-reflective and want to take action to improve outcomes. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have made some effective decisions, for example, with regards to improving attendance and behaviour. However, they acknowledge that there is work to do on establishing consistently high expectations for performance across the school, and on tightening up monitoring procedures to prioritise pupils securing strong foundations in their learning. This is particularly important for those pupils who are vulnerable or face barriers to their learning.

Governors provide some challenge to leaders. They know the school's strengths and areas for development, but lack some clarity in their perception of the reasons behind low attainment outcomes and the drive and focus that the school needs to improve them.

Leaders and governors know their school community and families well. They support and manage staff workload and wellbeing effectively. Typically, leaders provide staff with high-quality, relevant training. Leaders and governors build constructive relationships with parents and the wider community to foster trust and support pupils' sense of belonging. They collaborate with other schools and professionals in a culture of mutual support and challenge.

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

This vibrant, multi-cultural school welcomes pupils warmly through the gates every morning. Pupils benefit from the positive inter-faith relationships that leaders and staff have forged in the community. From the Reception Year onwards, pupils come into school confidently and settle quickly. Staff provide warm, attentive support, which helps pupils feel safe and ready for the day.

Pupils enjoy their learning and engage well in lessons. However, the school's expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are inconsistent. A significant proportion of pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education, both at the end of the Reception Year and at the end of key stage 2. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers. Leaders have not established strong foundations in learning or effective, rapid catch up for those who require it. This results in uneven progression through the curriculum for some pupils.

Pupils move around the school calmly. They demonstrate positive behaviour, rooted in their school values to 'live, love and learn'. Pupils are consistently polite and welcoming to visitors. They trust staff to deal with any behaviour incidents that arise. This includes with bullying should it occur. The school has taken effective steps to improve attendance and is sustaining these improvements over time.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of life in modern Britain and have meaningful opportunities to contribute to their school and wider community. An example of this is the recent reverse advent calendar project, in which pupils took turns to give rather than receive a small item to support a local homeless charity. Pupils, including those with barriers to learning, value the wide range of clubs on offer, which leaders have thoughtfully organised around pupils' daily religious observance. They speak with enthusiasm about activities, such as curling, football and choir. These opportunities broaden pupils' experiences and help develop their talents.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop a more accurate process for identifying pupils with additional barriers and how best to reduce them. They should use their assessment outcomes and external advice to inform high-quality support plans that staff can use effectively to improve learning for pupils with additional needs.

- Leaders should strengthen provision and address gaps in pupils' learning so that every pupil, including those in the early years, develop secure knowledge in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics.
 - Governors and leaders should establish a consistent culture of high expectations across all key stages and strengthen their monitoring of teaching to ensure it leads to improved outcomes for all pupils.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Fred Kershaw.

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 and staff. They also met with members of the governing board, 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 and for pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection was in September 2023.

The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Headteacher : Julian Rogers

Lead inspector:

Ruth Moran, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Joanna Atherton, Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Barraclough, 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 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

271

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

280

Close to 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)

31.00%

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

6.27%

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

22.88%

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	49%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	53%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	60%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	61%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	54%	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	54%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	53%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	51%	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	65%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	61%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	42%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	46%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31%	44%	Below

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	53%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	60%	Close to average

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	51%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average

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	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	42%	68%	-26 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	46%	67%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	31%	66%	-35 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	53%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	80%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	51%	78%	-27 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 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	63%	80%	-17 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	62%	79%	-18 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	79%	-4 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)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.7%	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 (2 term)	7.7%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	14.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	18.4%	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.

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