

Hoole St Michael CofE Primary School

Address: Liverpool Old Road, Much Hoole, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 5JQ

Unique reference number (URN): 119570

Inspection report: 20 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 

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance and have secured positive attendance rates over a sustained period. They have embedded robust systems to monitor attendance to swiftly identify any drops in pupils' attendance. For specific groups of pupils where attendance has fluctuated, such as for some disadvantaged pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders act effectively to provide support and remove the barriers preventing them from getting to school.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They have positive attitudes to their education and engage particularly well when activities match their learning needs and abilities. Leaders have established a calm and orderly environment, where staff follow the school's restorative approaches to behaviour with confidence and consistency. This reflective approach ensures that bullying or discrimination remains rare and that staff deal with concerns thoroughly. During social times, pupils play harmoniously together and demonstrate kindness and cooperation across all age groups. In the dining hall, pupils remain calm and sensible, engaging in polite conversation as they eat their meals together.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' progress in different year groups across subjects beyond English and mathematics is variable. In some of these subjects, pupils' knowledge is not deep nor secure. Consequently, pupils often struggle to recall previous learning. This inconsistency in achievement across the broader curriculum has mostly resulted from the lack of a sufficiently tailored, well-taught curriculum over time. Some pupils clearly demonstrate the capacity to achieve more, and the school does not help them to maximise this potential over time.

In English and mathematics, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education. This typically includes disadvantaged pupils. For example, most pupils achieve outcomes in national tests that align with the national averages. Additionally, children in the early years generally attain the expected standard for their age.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Until recently, leaders have acted slowly to address the previous area for improvement related to curriculum design. Large scale curriculum changes have occurred in rapid succession over the last year. These transitions have lacked effective management. For example, leaders have not suitably adapted many of these new curriculums for mixed-age classes prior to their implementation. This responsibility has generally fallen to teachers to navigate themselves without sufficient guidance. The volume and pace of curriculum change have limited staff's ability to gain the necessary expertise in, and understanding of, new approaches before their introduction in the classroom. As a result, curriculum delivery and

adaptations for disadvantaged pupils have been inconsistent. To compound this, teachers have struggled to use assessment strategies to identify and address existing gaps in pupils' knowledge and work out what pupils have missed, due to the switch in curriculum materials.

Through the curriculum, leaders have prioritised pupils' swift acquisition of crucial skills in English and mathematics. Consequently, pupils have developed a secure grasp of number facts and can read and write well.

New leaders have quickly developed an accurate insight into the quality of pupils' education. They have diagnosed the root causes that are preventing effective curriculum delivery and hinder pupils from reaching their full potential. Appropriate actions have been identified to resolve the issues with the curriculum, but these are mostly in their infancy.

Early years

Needs attention 

Children typically attain the standard expected for their age by the time that they complete the Reception Year. However, these positive outcomes mask a curriculum that is not as well thought through as it should be. Leaders have not set out in detail a robust curriculum structure for staff to follow. Consequently, staff are sometimes left to create reactive or ad-hoc learning opportunities that broadly relate to overarching topic themes, curriculum milestones and assessment end points. This means that children move through sequences of learning more incoherently than they should. Additionally, for some disadvantaged children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the curriculum delivery is not suitably adapted to cater for their needs and individual starting points. As a result, this absence of a sufficiently well-designed curriculum limits how well staff challenge all children to deepen their understanding and secure the strongest possible foundations for Year 1.

The school builds effective partnerships with parents and carers, which helps children settle into school quickly. Staff provide deep care and encouragement to children from the moment they join in the early years. Staff foster positive relationships and interact with children with enthusiasm, talking about their learning and developing their language skills. The school places appropriate priority on making sure children quickly gain the building blocks of reading. Consequently, many children gain a sound knowledge of phonics.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders, including governors, have let slip their oversight of the use and impact of interventions and support strategies intended to support disadvantaged pupils. This includes the pupil premium strategy. This gap in oversight has limited leaders' ability to refine their strategic actions and overall support offered to disadvantaged pupils. Remedial actions to improve this position have started but remain embryonic.

New leaders have taken swift action to begin to improve the school's approaches to identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. They work increasingly well in partnership with external agencies to gain expert input where appropriate. Leaders have also recently initiated a programme of professional development for staff to develop their ability to cater for disadvantaged pupils with barriers to their learning. These changes have started to lead to sharper consideration

of the personalised support or curriculum adaptations that these pupils need to achieve their potential. However, these positive actions have had limited time to become embedded or significantly improve classroom practice, which remains variable. Ultimately, this means that some disadvantaged pupils continue to experience inconsistent levels of support to access their learning effectively.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

There have been significant changes in leadership since the start of the academic year. Many governors are also relatively new in post. Although leaders have begun to introduce a range of strategies, it is too early for many of these to have taken hold or to show any sustained impact on the quality of education pupils receive, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Similarly, while governors have started to develop a better understanding of curriculum weaknesses, they have not ensured that changes to curriculums, including in the early years, have been strategically well managed. Their oversight of the pupil premium strategy has also slipped, leaving them without a clear understanding of its impact on disadvantaged pupils' achievement. Over time, governors' insight into the quality of education has not been precise enough to provide leaders with the robust challenge and support required. Governors are, however, dedicated to the school. They understand their statutory duties and keep a close eye on safeguarding and most financial matters. They are particularly mindful of leaders' and staff's workload and wellbeing.

New leaders have wasted little time in accurately identifying the school's strengths and most pressing areas to address. They are already implementing the building blocks that are needed to ensure longer-term strategic intentions are successful. For example, leaders facilitate additional guidance, professional development and opportunities for subject leaders to improve their skills and gain a sufficient oversight of their areas of responsibility.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Across the taught curriculum, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of the range of cultures and backgrounds represented in their country and the wider world. Their knowledge of the fundamental British values that underpin society is also limited. This hinders pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have ensured that the personal development programme contains age-appropriate content to help pupils learn fundamental skills and knowledge for later life. For example, pupils learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and how to develop positive, safe relationships with others. They also learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. All pupils benefit from this curriculum content.

Leaders provide a personal development programme that offers pupils a range of opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils reflect on their own beliefs and experiences through the likes of regular assemblies. They engage with ethical issues, such as being eco-friendly, with 'eco-warriors' elected to keep a check on the school's carbon footprint. Pupils have also recently engaged in charitable activities in the community, such as the fundraising 'tractor pull' event. Leaders keep a close eye on the uptake of these

opportunities and others, such as the extra-curricular clubs and school trips, to ensure that all pupils can benefit from the broader opportunities on offer.

Pupils develop a clear sense of confidence. They quickly learn important social skills, such as how to cooperate respectfully with others while having the conviction to express their own views in a non-confrontational way. They also understand what is right from what is wrong. These skills and knowledge enable pupils to engage in thoughtful discussions about ethical issues and current events.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have not sufficiently ensured that all pupils receive a consistently high-quality education across the full breadth of the curriculum. While pupils regularly attain the expected standard in national end of key stage assessments, they do not achieve as well in other subjects, and some do not reach their full potential. This is primarily due to inconsistencies in how subjects are designed and delivered, including in the early years. It is also sometimes because pupils do not receive the precise support and adaptations that they need, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils attend well, are safe, happy and feel cared for in this nurturing school environment. They benefit from loving relationships with staff and appreciate the school's warm, supportive atmosphere. Pupils get along well. They are kind to each other, and it is very rare for them to experience any forms of bullying or unkindness. They behave and conduct themselves sensibly throughout the school day. Pupils contribute meaningfully to the wider life of the school, taking on leadership responsibilities, such as being 'guardian angels' to those in the early years, which helps children settle into school routines.

Pupils particularly enjoy the range of broader experiences available to them beyond the academic curriculum, such as gardening, choir and sporting competitions, which enrich their school experience. They develop a respectful and tolerant attitude towards others. However, the curriculum that they experience does not sufficiently develop their overall understanding of different cultures, beliefs, and fundamental British values. This means that their broader preparation for life in modern Britain is less secure.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that all curriculums, including in the early years, are suitably well designed and delivered, and adapted where required to suit mixed-age classes and pupils' individual needs and capabilities.
- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment strategies consistently well to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge across the full breadth of the curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that support and adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are consistently effective so that these pupils can make suitable progress from their own starting points.

- Leaders should ensure that pupils are able to develop a secure understanding of different cultures, beliefs, and fundamental British values.
 - Governors should improve their oversight of the school's work to provide a more rigorous level of challenge to leaders regarding the quality of education and the use of the pupil premium strategy.
 - Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the necessary expertise and opportunities to evaluate their areas of responsibility well and help to drive the necessary improvements in curriculum design and delivery.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Gerallt Evans-Hughes.

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, who is also the new special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese. He also spoke with a group of governors that included the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at curriculum information and pupils' workbooks. They reviewed school documentation that included: the school's self-evaluation document; the school development plan; external quality assurance visit records and governing body meeting minutes records.

There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. However, inspectors sought their views in person through various activities. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2024.

The school also, under the same registration and address, runs nursery provision for 3-year-olds.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

There has been significant turbulence in staffing and leadership in a short space of time. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENDCo and early years leader all left the school at the end of the previous academic year. A new headteacher assumed her post in September 2025. An assistant headteacher was seconded in September 2025 but returned to their substantive school at the end of the autumn term.

Lead inspector:

David Spruce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Julie Stevens, 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

89

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)

14.61%

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

2.25%

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

7.87%

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	70%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	80%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	45%	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	89%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	85%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	93%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	91%	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	78%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	80%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	83%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	90%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	73%	Above
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	63%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	75%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	88%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	75%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	63%	68%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	75%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	88%	78%	10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	75%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

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

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.4%	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 (2 term)	9.5%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.5%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	8.3%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional 

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

Strong standard ●

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

Expected standard ●

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

Needs attention ●

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

Urgent improvement ●

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

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