

Altham St James Church of England Primary School

Address: Altham St James CE Primary School, Burnley Road, Altham, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 5UH

Unique reference number (URN): 119577

Inspection report: 10 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils at this school rarely miss a day. Persistent absence is very low. When necessary, leaders use their very positive relationships with parents and carers to help pupils attend well. Leaders provide very effective support for pupils and families. If pupils struggle to come to school, this support is successful in helping them.

Pupils' impeccable behaviour and attitudes to learning begin in the early years. Staff apply high expectations consistently. Leaders have established a culture in which pupils want to behave well and support each other. Pupils see this as an important part of their role in school. On the rare occasion that a pupil behaves less well, staff use highly effective strategies to help them get back on track. These are almost never needed. Bullying is very rare. When it does happen, pupils rightly trust that adults will help them and deal with any incidents swiftly. Leaders ensure that all pupils acquire the tools that they need to manage their feelings and behaviour. Pupils routinely use these strategies independently. Older pupils act as superb role models for younger pupils. Together, pupils and staff create a calm, orderly atmosphere that helps everyone to focus on their learning.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Across the curriculum, pupils typically achieve well. Pupils who face disadvantage generally achieve better than their peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their different starting points. The quality of pupils' work is consistent across different subjects.

Pupils achieve particularly well in writing and tend to achieve better than their peers nationally in mathematics. In mathematics, pupils become fluent and confident. In writing, pupils progress well and write to a high level. From the early years onwards, pupils achieve particularly well in this area. Older pupils write for purpose, employing impressive language to engage the reader.

In a small number of subjects, the achievement of some pupils is hampered because they have not fully secured the important knowledge that they need. Where this is the case, they are a little less secure in their understanding.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have established an ambitious curriculum from the early years to Year 6. They check the impact of this curriculum on pupils and take carefully considered actions to make improvements if needed. Overall, the curriculum is well taught and supports pupils to be ready for the next stage of their education. From the early years onwards, staff make sure that pupils gain important foundations in learning. Teachers use their expertise so that

children develop their knowledge of phonics to be ready for Year 1. Across school, staff help pupils to become fluent readers. They relish the books that they read and read widely across a range of subjects.

Staff routinely adapt lessons to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff design these adaptations around the important knowledge that pupils need to practise. This helps pupils with SEND to learn well.

In a small number of subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils need to acquire has not been identified precisely enough. Some important concepts that pupils need to understand have not been defined carefully. Where this is the case, pupils develop some misconceptions and are less secure in their understanding.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders make sure that children in the early years mostly secure the important foundations for their future learning. Children swiftly acquire the skills that they need to read, write and use numbers confidently. Children regularly practise and apply these important skills. They become fluent readers, mathematicians and writers. The range and complexity of writing that children create are particularly impressive.

Typically, adults use high-quality interactions with children to extend their vocabulary and communication skills. Children copy this language and use it in their own play. Children regularly share books with adults. They enjoy exploring new stories and relish the vocabulary that they learn.

Children benefit from a well-structured curriculum and purposeful activities that help them to acquire the important concepts that they need. Pupils enjoy these activities. This helps them to sustain their focus and concentrate on their learning.

Leaders and staff have superb relationships with parents and carers. They get to know families and children quickly. Leaders use these positive relationships to help secure the support and care that children need.

Leaders have created a calm, happy environment where children feel cared for and confident to learn and explore. Embedded routines and expectations help children to behave exceptionally well. They develop a love of learning that helps them to be successful in the future. Children achieve well and are ready for Year 1 and beyond.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders get to know pupils and their families quickly. From the moment pupils are welcomed into the early years, staff accurately identify pupils' needs. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to make sure that pupils have the right help. Pupils receive effective support. They feel well cared for and are ready to learn. Leaders check the impact of their work on each pupil. Every pupil is valued as a unique individual. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive support that is tailored for them. Leaders make sure that they draw on external professionals and wider expertise to support pupils where necessary. Because of this support, pupils with SEND are ready for their future learning.

Leaders use additional funding carefully and in the best interests of pupils. This has a positive impact on the experiences of the small number of pupils who face disadvantage. Disadvantaged pupils receive the same range of experiences as others. Staff receive suitable training so that they can meet the needs of pupils in school. Staff use this training to ensure that every pupil is included. They typically adapt the activities that pupils complete so that all pupils experience success.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school. They understand what the school does well and where further improvement would benefit pupils. Governors draw on a range of information, including focused visits to the school, to ensure their knowledge is up to date. They use this knowledge and their expertise to support and challenge leaders effectively. Alongside governors, leaders ensure that any changes that they make are in pupils' best interests. Sometimes, the important records that leaders make about aspects of the school's work have gaps. This makes it harder for governors to check the actions that leaders take and hold them to account effectively.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties well. They help to guide and support leaders by making sure that resources are used carefully to support all pupils. Leaders and governors make sure that pupils facing disadvantage are taught well and experience success. Leaders make effective use of the expertise that exists in school. All staff receive professional learning that helps them to develop their expertise. They appreciate the support that leaders provide for their wellbeing. Staff are very proud to work at this school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a well-structured personal, social, health and economic education curriculum that supports all pupils well. Pupils generally secure their understanding of the fundamental British values, such as the rule of law and tolerance. Pupils hold mature conversations about these values because they are well informed. This helps pupils to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. They embrace difference. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other. They understand when relationships are healthy. Pupils know how to stay safe when online and how to keep physically and mentally healthy. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. They typically acquire the knowledge that they need to be ready for their future lives.

Pupils participate in a range of clubs that inspire them to pursue their interests. For example, some pupils pursue learning the guitar, while others learn to cook. Some are inspired to take these opportunities further. For example, some pupils cook at home while others are inspired to develop their musical talents outside of school. Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who face disadvantage, are fully included in school life. They experience the same range of opportunities as their peers and are well supported.

Pupils benefit from a number of visitors. For example, pupils met with an author. They also found out about a local resident who inspired the women's suffrage movement. Leaders select activities that enhance and deepen pupils' learning. Some pupils contribute to their school as leaders. Some help with collective worship, and others help organise games at

break time. These opportunities help to develop pupils' sense of citizenship and to be aspirational for their future lives.

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

The school's vision for children to be the 'best they can be and believe they can make a difference' inspires adults and pupils alike. Leaders have established a school culture that helps every pupil to succeed and belong to a family of learners that will support them. Leaders swiftly secure a deep knowledge of individual pupils and their families. Leaders take effective action to remove and reduce the barriers to learning that some pupils face. Pupils in this school relish their learning. They flourish with a high-quality range of activities that they find inspiring.

Pupils behave very well. Staff implement a consistent set of expectations. Pupils consistently rise to these expectations. From the early years onwards, children quickly settle to new routines. By the time they leave Reception, children have secured habits for future success. Relationships between adults and pupils are highly positive. Pupils copy the adults around them in their relationships with each other. Bullying is almost non-existent. If it happens, leaders take swift action to make sure that it stops.

Pupils want to attend their school. They rarely miss a day. Pupils know how much their education matters for their future aspirations.

Leaders have implemented a carefully structured and ambitious curriculum. Pupils relish the challenge that this curriculum brings. It is taught well, and pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support that helps them to succeed in their learning.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of experiences. For example, many pupils learn to play a musical instrument. Some pupils take part in drama performances, while others learn to dance. Pupils are enthused by these opportunities, which inspire them to pursue new interests.

Next steps

- In a small number of subjects, leaders should identify the important knowledge that pupils need to acquire more clearly.
 - Leaders should make sure that, in a small number of subjects, the important concepts that children need to understand are clearly defined so that staff can share these definitions consistently with pupils to help pupils' understanding.
 - Leaders should ensure that the important records that they make about the school's work are complete so that governors can check leaders' actions and hold them to account effectively.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jill Jones.

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, some governors, including the chair, groups of staff and pupils during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with some parents and carers at the start of the school day.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils in the school.

Headteacher: Carol Ann Woods

Lead inspector:

Jen Sloan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Chris Fielding, His Majesty's 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 10 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

81

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

63

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)

7.41%

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

1.23%

Below 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

6.17%

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

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	69%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	64%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	75%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	91%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	100%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	91%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	78%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	82%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	73%	Above
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	S	46%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	S	62%	S
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	S	59%	S
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	S	60%	S
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	S	68%	S
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	S	80%	S
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	S	78%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

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

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	3.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.5%	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)	3.0%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	0.0%	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.

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