

Harpley CofE VC Primary School

Address: School Lane, Harpley, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 6DY

Unique reference number (URN): 121092

Inspection report: 13 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 

Attendance at the school, while lower in the previous academic year, is now improving. More pupils now attend regularly. Fewer pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders rightly recognise that attendance is a barrier to pupils achieving more highly and have taken suitable action to address this. Leaders monitor attendance closely and, where attendance falls below expectation, they take appropriate action. While a few pupils continue to not attend school regularly enough, leaders are tackling this head-on. They now need to ensure this improved culture of attendance is sustained for all pupils.

Leaders have introduced a new policy for managing behaviour across the school. Staff have been trained to listen carefully to pupils and to better understand the reasons behind their behaviour. This approach is working. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils feel safe in school and staff create a positive environment based upon caring relationships. In classrooms, staff typically manage behaviour effectively. Some pupils are developing their learning behaviours and, on occasion, may lose focus, but overall learning in classrooms proceeds without disruption.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is a strength of the school. Leaders know pupils well and work closely with them and their families to understand their needs. Where necessary, adjustments are made to make school a place where pupils feel safe and secure.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. The school has clear systems that enable them to identify the barriers these pupils have to learning. Trained staff create and implement comprehensive support plans, which enable pupils with SEND to access their learning. These are generally well targeted. Where pupils need something more bespoke, this is put in place quickly and typically meets their needs.

Disadvantaged pupils are fully included in the life of the school. The school's pupil premium strategy ensures that pupils are supported to access wider opportunities, including residential trips. These pupils are starting to make better progress academically, and the school is providing targeted support to improve this further.

The school actively engages with external services, such as the virtual school. They readily put in place suggested support strategies and seek further support from external professionals when required.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development offer is broad and purposeful and suitably prepares pupils for life beyond the school.

The personal, social and health education curriculum meets statutory requirements and ensures pupils revisit key concepts regularly. The school has identified the most important knowledge to reinforce to pupils. For example, learning about internet safety is revisited termly. This enables pupils to understand how they should behave and act online in order to keep themselves safe. As a result of this careful sequencing, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of these important topics.

Collective worship is thoughtfully planned. Through this, pupils develop an understanding of their school values and fundamental British values. For example, pupils learn the importance of respecting themselves and people's differences.

The school's pastoral work to support pupils' wellbeing is particularly effective. All pupils benefit from the school's work on resilience and character. Some pupils benefit from work with other agencies. This work supports pupils to regulate their emotions and be ready to learn and to cope with life's challenges.

The school is working hard to strengthen the take up of clubs and wider opportunities, such as music tuition. Sports clubs are reasonably well attended and disadvantaged pupils are supported to access these. However, leaders recognise that they need to find a way for more pupils to benefit from their wider extra-curricular offer. Trips are a highlight for many pupils. They are particularly excited by their bi-annual residential trip, which gives them the chance to take part in adventurous sports that they would not normally access.

Older pupils benefit from becoming 'values leaders'. These pupils take on roles in the local community, such as leaflet drops and fundraising activities, they also take on leading roles in collective worship. This responsibility helps pupils to understand their role in school and wider society.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over the past 3 years, too few pupils have achieved the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Older pupils have gaps in key knowledge, for example in recalling times table facts and sentence construction, meaning they are not as ready for their next steps in education as they should be.

However, in some areas, pupils' achievement is starting to improve. Leaders' actions mean that pupils are steadily making better progress as they learn the curriculum. For example, younger pupils are increasingly developing their early reading knowledge at an age-appropriate rate. They are also forming positive habits with the way that they form letters and present their work. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are also starting to develop more secure knowledge.

Overall, pupils are learning the important knowledge they need to be successful in subjects across the wider curriculum. They build upon their previous learning effectively in subjects,

such as Spanish and history. This helps them to understand and remember new concepts with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is work to do to create greater consistency in how well pupils learn. Leaders recognise this. They have an accurate view of the curriculum and teaching across the school.

A sequenced curriculum is in place. This identifies the knowledge that pupils should learn and build upon each year. However, this is more developed in some subjects than others. For example, the school's mathematics curriculum is firmly in place and provides a clear structure to support teaching within this subject. Other subject curriculums need further development.

Across the school, there are some inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is taught. Leaders are beginning to act. Where effective, teachers model learning clearly and provide suitable tasks for pupils to practise and learn new knowledge. For example, in phonics, adults teach with clarity and pupils practise new sounds and letters in an effective way.

In other curriculum areas, teacher explanations are not as clear. Pupils are sometimes given tasks that are not well matched to their needs. Staff do not always check how well pupils are achieving in lessons. This means that sometimes key gaps in learning, such as accurate letter formation and sentence construction, are not addressed in a timely manner.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Pupils' academic experience is not yet giving them the opportunity to achieve their full potential. While staff are being trained to develop their practice, they are not yet suitably skilled at delivering a consistently effective approach to teaching and learning across the school. Progress in raising achievement is not happening as quickly as it might.

School leaders have provided stability and strategic direction for the school following a significant period of change. Leaders have worked with determination to make the school a place where pupils feel safe and secure. Improved attendance and the school's work to ensure all pupils are fully included in school life are examples of the impact of their efforts.

Staff are motivated to access training and support that will enable them to develop in their roles. They appreciate that more training is now available to them. They also value the careful consideration given to their workload as changes are introduced. Staff know leaders will support them and consider the impact on them as developments take place.

Over time, governors have not provided necessary challenge to school leaders. They did not check on leaders' work regularly enough. Recently, this has started to change. Governors have taken on more focused roles and are now accessing more training. They are starting to provide challenge to school leaders in areas where the school needs to improve. However,

this work is in its infancy and is not yet having an impact in securing the necessary improvements the school needs to make.

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

Harpley CofE VC Primary School is at the heart of the village community it serves. There are warm, positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and know adults will listen if they ever feel worried.

Over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they could. Too many leave school not academically ready for secondary school. There are early signs that achievement is starting to improve. However, there remains significant work to do to ensure that pupils consistently reach their full academic potential and gain the knowledge they need for their next stage of education.

The school places high importance on supporting pupils' wellbeing. This helps pupils to break down barriers to attending school and to access school more confidently. As a result of this focused work, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, generally attend well and arrive in school ready to learn.

Behaviour in and around school is positive. Pupils interact with each other in a friendly way. Older and younger pupils get along well together, playing games happily in the playground. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively. Behaviour in class is calm and generally well managed. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils contribute meaningfully to the local community. They eagerly represent the school at events and act as positive role models in fulfilling these responsibilities. For example, pupils contribute to church services, such as the Harvest Festival and raise money for local charities.

Next steps

- Leaders should further train and support staff to teach the curriculum with confidence and clarity. They should ensure that classroom practice more consistently meets the needs of different learners in the school's mixed-age classes.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils consistently receive precise and timely checks on work and learning to address gaps in key knowledge quickly and effectively.
 - Governors should be more rigorous and robust in challenging school leaders over key improvement priorities, such as curriculum implementation, achievement and attendance.
 - Leaders should continue to monitor and support pupils to secure sustained, strong attendance. This is particularly the case for those pupils who do not attend as well as they could.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mr Will Ridgwell.

The school is part of a federation called Great Massingham and Harpley C of E Schools Federation.

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, the special educational needs coordinator, a range of school staff, a group of governors, an external improvement advisor and a representative from the local authority during the inspection.

This school has a Church of England voluntary controlled religious character. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in October 2024.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Hilary Myhill: Executive Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Jonny Wallace, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Clare Gammons, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

56

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

56

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)

21.43%

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

5.36%

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

19.64%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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	28%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	64%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	73%	S

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	44%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	71%	S

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	64%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	73%	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

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	29%	46%	Below
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	57%	62%	Close to average
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	57%	59%	Close to average
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	29%	60%	Below
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	29%	68%	-39 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	57%	80%	-22 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	57%	78%	-21 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	29%	80%	-51 pp
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)	6.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	24.4%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	15.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.3%	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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