

Marwood Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School, Great Ayton

Address: Low Green, Great Ayton, Middlesbrough, TS9 6NN

Unique reference number (URN): 121495

Inspection report: 10 February 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 ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have planned a coherent and well-designed personal, social and health education programme. It helps pupils learn to understand how their actions can help people in their own community and the wider world. Pupils feel inspired to raise money for local and international causes. They care about protecting the environment. The local community benefits from events organised by the school, which helps to maintain long-standing traditions. For example, pupils take part in the annual village pancake race. The school has also helped to develop a community garden in the village. Leaders understand the potential risks pupils may face in the local area. They adapt the curriculum so pupils learn how to stay safe both in the community and online.

Pupils develop an understanding of fundamental British values. They understand the importance of tolerance, respect and equality. They take part in democratic processes by electing representatives for the Trinity group. This group helps organise village initiatives, such as coordinating humanitarian aid collections and promoting the creation of peace stones in response to global conflicts.

Pupils broaden their experiences through a wide range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors. These include trips to a farm, museums and a butterfly farm. A high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged take part in these opportunities.

Outdoor learning is well established. Pupils care for school hens, maintain the wildlife garden and look after the ponds. They also take part in life-cycle projects, such as hatching butterflies and tadpoles. Assemblies help develop pupils' spirituality. Their wellbeing is supported through mental health week and units within the curriculum. Pupils celebrate differences and show an in-depth knowledge of different faiths and cultures.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils typically achieve well. Leaders have strengthened the teaching of phonics. Pupils now gain the key knowledge they need to become fluent readers and writers. This improvement is reflected in the school's improved phonics outcomes in the national phonics screening checks. Leaders have introduced a new approach to handwriting, and pupils' letter formation is improving.

In mathematics, pupils usually build secure number knowledge. They enjoy applying what they know to solve problems. However, pupils do not always write numbers correctly. This makes it harder for them to check their work for errors.

Across many subjects, pupils recall detailed knowledge from previous learning. They make purposeful links across the curriculum and enjoy sharing what they know. Pupils are well

prepared for their next stage of education. However, given the high starting points for some pupils, they are not always provided with tasks that extend and deepen their thinking. This means that they do not always achieve as well as they could.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a result, attendance is above national figures, including for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Persistent absence has remained low over time. The attendance of pupils who are disadvantaged is improving. Leaders promote the importance of good attendance. Parents respond positively and reduce the number of term-time holidays taken. Leaders monitor attendance. However, their checks are not frequent enough to identify and respond swiftly to pupils who may be moving towards persistent absence.

Leaders have established clear routines, and most pupils behave well. Most pupils are generally calm across the school. Staff build positive relationships with them. However, a small minority of pupils are not consistently respectful to staff or to one another. They sometimes talk over each other and find turn-taking and listening difficult.

During unstructured times, behaviour can sometimes be boisterous. Staff do not consistently address low-level behaviour well enough. Pupils understand expectations, but leaders do not always apply monitoring and follow-up actions consistently. The behaviour policy does not define precisely enough how such incidents should be managed.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It ensures that pupils' knowledge and skills are built over time. Leaders have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas that need to be further adapted. They have strengthened aspects of the curriculum to more closely meet the context of the school. For example, amendments have been made to the English curriculum. It has now been enriched using high quality and diverse texts.

The curriculum is typically taught well. Teachers are provided with opportunities to develop subject expertise. Pupils' learning is checked at the end of a unit of work. However, teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding of key concepts or knowledge throughout the lessons or over a sequence of lessons. Therefore, opportunities are missed to address misconceptions in a timely way.

Leaders have taken recent actions to secure strong foundations, and pupils' handwriting, spelling and mathematical fluency are improving. However, at times, this is inconsistent across the curriculum. Number formation is variable. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities usually make progress from their starting points in writing and across the curriculum. Pupils at the early stage of reading are well supported. Staff are skilled at helping them rehearse key knowledge and support them to apply this to help them read more fluently.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in Reception make a positive start. Staff get to know the children before they start school so that they can support any additional needs from the beginning. Staff build caring and trusting relationships with children, parents and carers. Children feel safe and well cared for.

The early years curriculum inspires children's imagination. They benefit from a tailored programme of learning outside, where they enjoy, for example, acting out the stories they have been reading. This helps them embed their learning. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading and writing. Phonics sessions are generally taught well. Children are typically reading with fluency appropriate to their stage of learning. Children who need extra help with phonics receive the support they need to help them catch up.

Children are typically well prepared for Year 1. Overall, the curriculum enables children to make secure progress in all areas of learning. Nevertheless, the impact of the curriculum and teaching is less consistent in some areas than others. This is because, in these areas, leaders have not mapped out explicitly the key vocabulary children need to learn. This reduces how well the curriculum supports children to build their word knowledge over time. In a few instances, staff do not make the most of opportunities to further deepen children's understanding, for example through skilful questioning.

Children typically enjoy learning and concentrate well on the activities provided, especially those involving drawing and writing. On occasion, staff do not support children to maintain their focus as they play and learn, both indoors and outdoors. This also reduces how well children are supported to apply and extend what they know.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is a priority for leaders. They know pupils and families well. Effective transition arrangements mean staff identify pupils' needs before they start school. As a result, skilled staff put support in place from pupils' first days. When needed, leaders work closely with external professionals to ensure pupils receive precise and targeted support. Staff receive appropriate training so they can meet the range of needs within the school.

Staff know pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged well. They monitor progress regularly and adapt support so it helps pupils make progress from their starting points. However, during lessons, staff do not always check pupils' understanding of new learning precisely enough. This slows the progress some pupils make.

Support plans and targeted strategies are in place for pupils who require them. However, information gathered from assessments is not consistently used to further direct classroom adaptations and to secure steady progress for pupils with SEND.

Leaders regularly review the impact of the additional funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that they have priority access to clubs and visits and their academic progress is carefully checked.

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's context and the barriers pupils face. They have identified appropriate priorities, including improving phonics, handwriting and spelling. They have begun to take effective action to address these areas. Leaders have reviewed and adapted the curriculum so it is more diverse and includes a broader range of texts. Some aspects of this work are at an early stage, but leaders have set a clear direction and show commitment to securing sustained improvement.

Staff report that leaders are considerate of workload and wellbeing. They are provided with opportunities to develop their subject knowledge. For example, recent training has strengthened the teaching of phonics and mathematical fluency.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are actively involved in the school's strategic leadership and bring a wide range of expertise. Governors understand the financial and organisational implications of fluctuating pupil numbers in a small school. They provide appropriate oversight of resources, including the allocation and impact of the school's pupil premium strategy to support disadvantaged pupils. They support and challenge leaders effectively. They are also mindful of the need for leaders to have more efficient and accessible approaches to record keeping.

Leaders and governors have developed positive relationships with parents, carers and the community. Governors share leaders' aspirations to provide a wide range of experiences that prepare pupils well for their future lives. Leaders and governors use their expertise to support events such as sports and science weeks.

External partners, including the local authority and diocese, have an accurate view of the school. They provide suitable support and challenge.

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

Pupils are treasured by the staff at Marwood Church of England Infant School. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is appropriately sequenced to help pupils broaden and develop their knowledge over time. Leaders provide exciting experiences, such as opportunities to re-enact newly learned fairy tales in the forest school and to take part in a nativity within the community that featured a therapy donkey. Parents and carers say that children come home excited to share what they have been learning. Older pupils recall their previous learning in detail. As a result of the rich curriculum and experiences provided, pupils are keen to attend school each day. This is seen in the consistently high attendance rates over time.

Most pupils achieve well and are ready for their next stage of education. Leaders work hard to identify and reduce barriers to learning. Staff provide timely support to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities close gaps in their learning. Leaders also promote positive mental health and help pupils develop resilience and good character. Pupils are proactive in supporting local, national and charitable causes. They engage well

with the community, which benefits from initiatives led by the school. These include litter picking and developing the community garden.

Most pupils build positive and respectful relationships with staff, visitors and their peers. Typically, pupils behave well in lessons and socially. They feel safe because of the care provided by the staff. Bullying is rare and teachers take appropriate action if it occurs.

Through assemblies, the curriculum and community activities, pupils develop an understanding of equality, respect and tolerance. These experiences prepare them well for life beyond school.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of activities, events and experiences that widen their experiences and enrich the curriculum. For instance, they have opportunities to use microscopes and to study the DNA helix. Stereotypical views about careers are challenged through visits from female farmers and scientists.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen their strategic oversight of attendance, behaviour and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to help them evaluate the effectiveness of provision and secure rapid improvement.
 - Leaders should refine the early years curriculum to ensure that, in all areas of learning, it includes precise expectations for how children's vocabulary should be developed and practised over time.
 - In early years, leaders should strengthen teaching approaches, including how staff support children to sustain focus, so that children are consistently well supported to apply and deepen their knowledge in all areas of the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively within lessons and across a sequence of lessons, to quickly identify and address misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge.
 - Leaders should ensure that all pupils develop self-discipline and consistently demonstrate high levels of respect for others, including peers, visitors and adults, both in and beyond the classroom.
 - Leaders should ensure that the work provided for pupils enables all pupils to achieve well from their starting points, including the most able and those with SEND.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mrs Victoria Bradley.

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 headteachers, staff, pupils, parents and carers. They also spoke with a representative from the diocese, members of the local governing body a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

At the time of the inspection, there were 53 pupils on roll at the school.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2017.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Co-headteachers: Mrs Dorothy Walton and Mrs Emma Anderson

Lead inspector:

Nicky White, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Chris Baines, 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

43

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

69

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)

9.30%

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

0.00%

Well 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

11.63%

Close to 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).

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)	3.8%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.9%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.6%	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)	11.4%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	2.9%	14.6%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.7%	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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