

Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School

Address: Drummonds Close, Longhorsley, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 8UT

Unique reference number (URN): 122283

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' attendance is consistently high. This is the case for all groups of pupils, including for those pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Right from the start, pupils attend school regularly. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is very low. Leaders forensically examine attendance data. They expertly work with families to encourage good attendance and discourage term-time holidays. Pupils, parents and carers understand the importance of good attendance. Pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of belonging further reduce the barriers to their attendance.

Pupils behave consistently well in and around school. They show commitment to their learning, even when faced with challenging tasks. They are kind, thoughtful and respectful to staff and each other. Pupils who occasionally struggle to focus in lessons are provided with the adaptations that help them regulate themselves. Whole-school policies are implemented consistently by staff. For example, the 'marbles in the jar' system is used in all classes to reward good behaviour. Pupils enjoy receiving rewards for their good behaviour. All staff act as positive role models. There is shared responsibility for good behaviour between all staff and pupils. There are no incidents of bullying.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children in the early years get off to a very positive start. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. Children in Nursery and Reception Years develop strong foundations in reading and writing through a systematic, precisely taught phonics programme. Their vocabulary knowledge is extended and deepened through high-quality interactions with skilful staff. Staff carefully model language and repeat key words. Children have extensive opportunities to apply their newly acquired reading and writing knowledge through carefully planned and ambitious activities across the provision.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum based on an engaging and diverse range of core stories. The offer for 3- and 4-year-olds is carefully planned to ensure all children make progress from their starting points. Staff carefully track each child and plan precise support to enable them to maximise their progress. As a result, children in the early years provision are ready for their next stage of education.

Children support one another and are respectful of staff and peers. For example, children in Reception Year help children in Nursery Year to write their names by fetching their name cards. Children develop resilience and independence. They benefit from embedded routines. The environment is inspiring and imaginative. It provides a variety of experiences for children to learn across all areas of the curriculum. Parents and carers embrace opportunities to see how children learn within the provision.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have developed an effective approach to supporting pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This approach is carefully planned and sequenced. Every opportunity is

taken to develop pupils' character. The school's values are woven throughout the programme. The impact of the offer is clearly seen through how pupils of all ages act with integrity.

Pupils, despite their young age, have a sophisticated understanding of the importance of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils embrace and celebrate difference. By studying a diverse range of books and learning about other faiths and cultures, they have developed a strong sense of empathy and open-mindedness. This is further enhanced by visits to a local mosque and synagogue, as well as listening to a Hindu leader who visited the school virtually. Pupils learn about different customs and practices from teachers on placement from different countries. Pupils learned about Chinese New Year, and they loved learning to speak and write some Chinese. Pupils have a comprehensive knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and offline. They also learn about how their bodies change and how there are different types of families.

Pupils take on various leadership responsibilities. Pupils from across the school help identify charities that the school can support. They help other pupils understand the importance of these courses through presentations, the creation of displays and writing letters to parents. The school is at the heart of the village. Pupils led a remembrance for Victory in Europe Day in the local church. This was attended by veterans and other members of the community.

The school provides pupils with many opportunities to widen their experiences. These include theatre visits and a trip to the zoo. The range of after-school clubs is popular. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourites, including astronomy club, forest school and the choir. Leaders ensure that clubs are accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and those known (or previously known) to children's social care.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve well. They acquire the early reading skills they need to become confident readers. This success has been sustained over time. For example, pupils' performance in phonics assessments is consistently above the national average. This allows pupils to be generally ready for the next stage in their education.

Despite occasional variation in the delivery of the curriculum, overall, pupils' work shows that they make suitable progress through the curriculum. Pupils' books evidence that they are working at an age-appropriate level. Pupils can typically recall prior learning. Some pupils are working above this level. Some pupils do not always achieve at the level that they are capable of across the curriculum.

Recent changes in the school's approach to teaching handwriting have ensured that pupils are writing with greater automaticity and have started to form letters and numbers more accurately. Further work across the school is planned to embed improvements in handwriting, the use of capital letters and presentation in books.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Longhorsley is an inclusive school. Leaders have procedures for identifying any barriers to learning that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) face. Needs are identified promptly. Typically, appropriate support is provided swiftly. Where necessary, leaders access specialist knowledge from external agencies. Based on the guidance, they ensure that interventions are precisely tailored to pupils' needs. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve and are determined that they access a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have taken steps to minimise the time that pupils are withdrawn from lessons.

Published outcomes at the end of Year 1 demonstrate that pupils with SEND typically acquire the skills and knowledge they need to read and write. Occasionally, as these pupils move through school, their progress slows. The gaps that these older pupils have in their learning are not consistently identified. As a result, they are not always provided with the resources they need to learn to calculate and write effectively.

Support plans have recently been improved and have appropriate, carefully planned targets. These are reviewed and adjusted regularly. Parents of pupils with SEND value the support provided for their children.

The small number of pupils who are disadvantaged and/or known or previously known to children's social care are well supported to ensure they have access to a wide variety of enrichment that enables them to thrive.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's context, strengths and priorities for improvement. Leaders are outward-facing and seek to stay up to date by engaging external partners to support school improvement priorities and to help monitor progress with this work. This is further strengthened by work with other local schools.

Leaders are committed to the professional development of staff. Recent work has led to embedding and securing improvements in the teaching of phonics and in the early years. Leaders have taken appropriate actions to improve handwriting and the consistent use of capital letters. It is too soon to see the full impact of this work. Leaders' oversight of other aspects of the curriculum, such as how it is implemented and of the use of assessment, is currently less well embedded.

Leaders have established positive relationships with parents, carers and the local community. They actively support the school to improve the environment. Leaders provide curriculum resources for teachers to enable them to improve teaching, reduce workload and support their wellbeing.

Governors are fully invested in the school's ongoing improvement. They undertake appropriate training to ensure they are well informed and effective in their statutory duties. They are an integral part of the school, conducting regular visits, contributing to the strategic

vision and supporting staff wellbeing. They provide appropriate support and challenge, including checking on the impact of the resources the school receives.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have recently redesigned and strengthened the curriculum across several subjects. This includes in English, design technology and the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. The English curriculum, closely linked to books, has strengthened pupils' understanding of diversity and the world around them. Further development of the mathematics curriculum is planned to ensure pupils have sufficient time to practise newly acquired knowledge and skills. Pupils currently have limited opportunities to practise learning multiplication tables.

Leaders have ensured that phonics teaching has improved. As a result, the teaching of early reading and writing has improved. Elsewhere, the way the curriculum is taught is not consistently effective. Too frequently, staff do not check that pupils have understood key concepts or skills before moving on to independent work. As a result, pupils are sometimes unable to complete their work. Some end-of-unit tests have recently been introduced to help staff identify misconceptions, but their implementation is currently inconsistent. Some pupils are unclear about how to improve their work. Some pupils are not always provided with work that challenges them or enables them to make progress from their starting points.

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

Pupils happily attend this school. It is warm and welcoming. Every pupil is known and valued. Children who join school later than their peers settle in quickly and make good friends.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. They are supported to learn by highly-skilled staff. Children in the Nursery Year are supported to work alongside Reception-age children, who help and encourage them in their learning. Pupils across the school are enthusiastic about learning. They show resilience when faced with more challenging tasks.

Pupils are reflective and have a good knowledge of local, national and global issues. Pupil ambassadors from across the school choose which charities the school should support. They promote these to other pupils at school and to members of the wider community. Recent charitable work has allowed pupils to understand the importance of fair trade and its impact on farmers globally. Pupils are knowledgeable about important British values and model these consistently. They are respectful of adults and each other. They are provided with opportunities to explore other faiths and cultures. They embrace these with enthusiasm. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.

Pupils behave well. Pupils love the social times and enjoy a range of activities. They engage well with each other, for example when working together to make a sophisticated bug hotel. Pupils say there is no bullying, but are confident that if there was, staff would deal with it.

Barriers faced by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified. Swift action is taken to address needs. There is occasional variability in the effectiveness of support offered to enable pupils to make academic progress during lessons.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge and skills, particularly handwriting and the use of capital letters, are identified and closed.
 - Leaders should strengthen how assessment is used during lessons and over time so that misconceptions can be accurately identified and gaps closed.
 - Leaders should further embed the effective use of adaptations in lessons to consistently and effectively meet the needs of all learners.
 - Leaders should strengthen their oversight of the curriculum to ensure it is implemented consistently across the year groups and meets the needs of all the pupils in the school.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors is Paul Truscott.

The school is part of the Federation of Longhorsley and Whalton C of E Schools.

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, other senior leaders, pupils, parents and carers during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with the Chair of Governors and other governors, representatives from the diocese of Newcastle and representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last Section 48 inspection of the school was in December 2024.

The school does not use alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Nichola Brannen

Lead inspector:

Nicky White, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andrew James, 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 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

90

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

87

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)

1.37%

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

2.22%

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

16.67%

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)	3.5%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.3%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.5%	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)	3.5%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.0%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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