

North Petherton Primary School

Address: School Fields, North Petherton, Bridgwater, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 6LU

Unique reference number (URN): 135830

Inspection report: 2 December 2025

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 is a high priority. The school monitors pupils' attendance. The school fosters positive relationships with families and takes a caring approach to identifying barriers and working together to overcome them. For example, they offer places in the breakfast club for those who need it. The school's clear and proactive strategy has led to attendance that is in line with the national average.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour, and pupils live up to these. In the early years, children respond well to routines and settle quickly. These routines continue throughout the school and are consistently applied so that pupils generally behave well. Pupils know the school rules of 'be kind, be respectful, and be safe'. Staff consistently model the behaviour they expect from pupils. For those who struggle with their behaviour, the school provides effective pastoral support. For example, pupils benefit from tailored support from skilled staff in the school's nurture provision. Leaders' newly developed approaches to tracking and responding to concerns over time has helped to secure improvements for individuals, but these approaches are not fully embedded.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is an entitlement for every pupil. A wide range of after-school clubs, such as football, netball and computer coding, help develop pupils' hobbies and interests. Leaders track participation in these activities so that they can take deliberate action to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not miss out. Furthermore, disadvantaged pupils benefit from appropriate pastoral provision.

Drama performances and concerts showcase pupils' talents and bring the school community together. Carol services at the local church, Remembrance Day activities and singing in the local theatre broaden their experiences and develop character. Pupils learn about a range of careers through science, technology and engineering workshops and from visitors, including barristers and midwives. This helps pupils develop ambitions for the future and raise aspirations.

The personal, social and health education curriculum develops pupils' understanding of online safety and how their bodies change as they get older. They learn about the importance of mental and physical health and link this to the physical education and sporting activities they engage in. Children in the early years improve their coordination and gross motor skills through early morning sensory activities, enabling all to get off to a good start to the school day. Older pupils benefit from residential trips to develop their resilience and teamwork skills.

Through their actions, pupils embody the fundamental British values. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of respect and equality. New pupils who arrive from different countries help develop a wider understanding of their own homes and different values or experiences. This broadens other pupils' horizons and wider cultural knowledge. The school supports

pupils to develop their self-awareness, independence and understanding through the forest school sessions.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

There are early signs of improvement, however, there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils, particularly those in key stage 1, benefit from a curriculum that prepares them for the next phase of their learning. Too many pupils have not grasped the basics of number facts and sentence structure. This impacts on the accuracy and quality of their written work. Furthermore, until recently there is no consistent approach to teaching letter formation and supporting pupils who continue to struggle with handwriting as they move through the school. This means, recent improvements have not had time to impact on pupils' learning fully.

Despite this, by the end of Year 6, most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve in line with national expectations. Leaders have rightly prioritised improvements to ensure the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the multiplication check in Year 4 and the phonics screening check in Year 1 improves.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have identified appropriate actions to further develop the curriculum and teaching. For example, the school has consulted with parents to increase the time pupils spend in school, bringing it in line with government expectations. Leaders have recently taken actions that begin to address some of the inconsistencies in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. That said, approaches to checking and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge are variable. Some teachers do not use the information they have to shape their teaching. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding remain unaddressed, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

Recently, changes have been made to further improve the teaching of phonics. However, over time, some phonics teaching does not build on what pupils already know. This prevents some pupils from becoming fluent readers as quickly as they could. Pupils in key stage 2 benefit from the new changes to the curriculum. Learning activities help them to remember important knowledge from topics they have covered recently. For instance, Year 3 pupils understand the consequences of why people live near volcanoes. Year 4 pupils know why rainforests matter and can identify biomes. However, weaknesses in the previous curriculum mean that pupils have gaps in their understanding of key concepts and important vocabulary.

Early years

Needs attention 

The early years curriculum is not ambitious enough. As a result, children do not build the knowledge they need for a successful transition to Year 1. Leaders intend to develop children's understanding of words, numbers and the world around them. However, until recently, the school did not place sufficient emphasis on the important vocabulary and communication skills that children need to secure. During adult-focused activities, there is variability in approach. For example, sometimes adult interactions do not extend children's vocabulary and broaden language development. In addition, some activities do not match the intended learning or promote curiosity, interest or critical thinking as well as they should.

In spite of this, the school ensures children learn to read when they start the Reception Year. Most children learn the sounds they need to decode, blend and read words with accuracy. The school establishes effective relationships with parents and carers as soon as children join the school. This helps children to settle quickly. They learn to play cooperatively alongside each other. Many activities, such as counting conkers, making rockets and using a hammer and pins, help develop children's fine motor and early counting skills.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school's oversight of how it uses funding for disadvantaged pupils has improved recently. However, the school does not fully know the impact of this funding on pupils' learning. Despite this, the gap in performance between those who are disadvantaged pupils and those who are not is closing.

The school engages in partnership with parents and carers and other professionals to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders use this information to create personalised learning plans. Some teachers implement these plans successfully to break down barriers to learning. However, some staff do not have sufficient knowledge to meet the needs of pupils, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders have not provided the support some teachers need to develop their expertise to adapt the curriculum effectively. Therefore, there is variability in how well learning meets pupils' needs. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not receive the support that they need to thrive. Pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged are fully included in all aspects of school life. Where appropriate, the school uses alternative provision to support the individual needs of pupils well.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The school is emerging from a period of leadership instability, which has affected the pace of improvement. Leaders have made decisive improvements to stem the decline in the quality of education that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, receive. Leaders work to ensure that the improvements needed do not increase staff workload. Staff, including early career teachers, feel overwhelmingly positive about the changes and support they receive. Staff value training around safeguarding, curriculum development and managing pupils' behaviour. While

progress is evident, more time is needed to see the impact of leaders' work across other aspects of the school.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and remain committed to the school. For example, they assure themselves that safeguarding processes are effective. However, the level of challenge and oversight for the standard of pupils' education has not been sufficiently robust, particularly for pupils in early years and in key stage 1. Governors recognise the need to accelerate improvement, strengthen accountability to ensure that all pupils benefit from a high-quality education.

Most parents and carers note improvements, especially in the care their children receive and leaders' approachability. However, a minority of parents and carers hold mixed views about the school. These parents do not feel as involved in their children's learning and progress as they would like.

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

Pupils experience a school that brings everyone together and where relationships matter. They start the school day on a positive note. Staff and leaders greet pupils warmly, and Year 6 'good morning ambassadors' make them feel included and valued. These routines help pupils feel safe and give them a sense of belonging, which makes them want to come to school.

Pupils enjoy the calm atmosphere that the school provides. They demonstrate friendliness, good manners and respect. As a result, most pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils understand what bullying is. Pupils trust staff to help them if they have any problems.

The school has set out what pupils should learn. However, delivery of the curriculum in the early years is inconsistent. Furthermore, expectations for what pupils can achieve, particularly in key stage 1, are not high enough, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

New leaders have recently introduced necessary changes to the school. They have begun to develop the skills and expertise of staff in how best to deliver the curriculum. However, many of these improvements are in their early stages and so have not had time to fully impact on pupils' learning. Despite this, by the time pupils leave the school, most achieve in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school provides a wide range of trips and visits that broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils actively live out the fundamental British values through leadership roles as school councillors or 'foresters'. Elections for these roles teach pupils the importance of democracy. The 'no outsiders' approach helps pupils to appreciate difference. They explore discrimination and equality through discussions in class and assemblies. As a result, pupils share a sense of pride in the school.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure staff have the knowledge and expertise to remove learning barriers and ensure that daily teaching meets all pupils' needs.
 - Leaders should improve the quality of the curriculum and its implementation for pupils in key stage 1 so that it consistently builds their core knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics.
 - Leaders should raise expectations so pupils secure important foundational knowledge in handwriting, sentence construction and number formation before moving on to the next stage of their education.
 - Leaders should ensure that opportunities to grow children's language and vocabulary are prioritised so that children benefit from high-quality adult interactions as they learn through play.
 - Leaders should build on their work to embed approaches to analysing and responding to behaviour incidents.
 - Leaders and governors should ensure that they develop their ability to offer support and challenge to improve the quality of education that pupils receive and they fulfil their roles with more precision.
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About this inspection

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, senior teachers, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and groups of staff. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. They considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher took up post in September 2025.

The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Melanie Lawson

Lead inspector:

Gavin Summerfield, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sophie Hillson, His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Light, His Majesty's Inspector

Dale Burr, 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 2 December 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

408

Above 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

420

Above 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)

18.14%

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

2.21%

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

12.01%

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

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)	69%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	77%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	69%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	79%	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	75%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	75%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	54%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	64%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45%	44%	Close to average

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	68%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	79%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	73%	60%	Above

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	65%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	79%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	58%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	58%	Close to average

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	62%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	64%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	59%	Close to average

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	54%	68%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	64%	69%	-5 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	45%	66%	-21 pp

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	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (revised)	79%	81%	-2 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	73%	78%	-6 pp

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	65%	78%	-13 pp
2024/25 (revised)	79%	78%	0 pp
2023/24 (final)	58%	78%	-19 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	77%	-23 pp

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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	64%	81%	-16 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	55%	79%	-25 pp

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 (1 term)	4.7%	5.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.5%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.2%	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 (1 term)	13.8%	14.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.2%	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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