

Folkestone St. Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

Address: Warren Road, CT19 6QH

Unique reference number (URN): 139310

Inspection report: 18 November 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

Early years

Expected standard 

Children enjoy the calm, happy and purposeful Nursery. Two- and three-year-old children are happy, safe and blossoming. They particularly enjoy using the sensory room where staff share rich discussions with children, helping them develop language and vocabulary from the start. The learning environment across early years is well resourced, with opportunities to develop in communication and language and physical development. Children are achieving well in many areas. However, some struggle with their writing and letter formation. Leaders have begun to successfully address this and raise standards in writing.

When interactions are high quality, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn what they need. They benefit from targeted support that addresses their communication needs. However, sometimes leaders have not ensured that staff have the knowledge and expertise to consistently secure high-quality interactions. This means that, on occasions, staff and child interactions do not help children develop their vocabulary as well as they could.

Overall, children achieve well by the end of Reception. They learn sounds to help them with their reading, which staff prioritise with targeted support and plenty of practice. Opportunities for mathematics and creative arts are varied and engaging, so children are continually interacting, creating and exploring. Staff are knowledgeable, caring and supportive. Children are generally well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school's focused work to identify and support pupils' needs begins in Nursery. It continues throughout the school to help with pupils' transition to secondary school. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the help of the caring team of staff. Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to assess and address pupils' specific needs in areas such as communication and language. Whenever needed, the school makes effective use of external support.

Many pupils benefit from adult support and tailored resources to help them with their learning and emotions. The pastoral offer particularly benefits disadvantaged pupils and those who have missed too much school in the past. Leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the pupils who may face barriers to their learning. The school's pupil premium strategy ensures that the most vulnerable pupils can thrive with targeted and measured support. The school is deeply committed to enabling every pupil to access the full breadth of the curriculum and personal development opportunities.

The school works closely with parents and carers. Leaders work with teachers and staff to frequently review and adapt provision to ensure a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors place pupils at the heart of every decision. They lead by example, modelling compassion, respect and enthusiasm to help pupils flourish and grow.

Leaders have ensured that high expectations for behaviour are fulfilled through shared values, policies and practice. Leaders have established a nurturing and inclusive culture across the school. Teachers, including those at the earliest stages of their careers, receive high-quality support to enhance their development. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and wellbeing. As a result, morale is positive, and everybody is proud to work here.

Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. They fulfil duties such as safeguarding with diligence and care.

Leaders recognise where more work is needed to ensure high-quality teaching and learning across the school. They have also ensured that recent improvements to attendance have a clear strategy to ensure pupils attend well in the future. Parents and carers speak highly of leaders and staff, commending the school's helpful communication and openness.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

Pupils learn to develop a sense of responsibility through well-considered personal, social, health and economic education. A wealth of pupil leadership roles promote opportunities for pupils to make a tangible difference to school life. Pupils learn about democracy when electing their peers to positions such as head boy and head girl. Pupils learn to be conscientious citizens through meaningful projects on climate change, community action, road safety and gender equality.

The school's work around international diversity is worthy of celebration. Every class is named after a country linked to the school. Teachers bring the world into the classroom with video calls connecting pupils to schools around the globe. Pupils explore multiculturalism and inclusion through this work, which supports their moral and spiritual awareness.

The school enriches pupils' lives further with trips to the beach, library and church. Pupils value the visits to the school from authors. There are many clubs such as dance, crochet, art, football and finger skateboarding. Pupils have access to a wide extracurricular offer. Leaders track pupils' involvement in clubs and wider activities. Leaders are beginning to use this information to support disadvantaged pupils to enjoy wider participation.

Leaders work closely with class teachers and the pastoral team to identify when pupils and their families need help. 'The Den' provides care and help for pupils with anxiety or other worries. This thoughtful provision particularly benefits pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those disadvantaged. Pupils learn about online safety, healthy relationships and healthy eating to promote their safety and wellbeing further. By the end of key stage 2, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils struggle to recall knowledge across subjects. The work they produce is not always of high quality. This means that pupils are not learning as well as they should. Some pupils do not secure key foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, they are not well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils now achieve broadly in line with national averages in tests, despite previously low attainment. Leaders recognised that pupils needed more support with their multiplication times tables. Leaders' focus on this has helped pupils to achieve better than national averages in Year 4. This success was particularly strong for disadvantaged pupils. Generally, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention ●

Too many pupils miss attending school regularly. The school has struggled to return pupils' attendance to pre-pandemic levels. This is particularly an issue for disadvantaged pupils. Over time, the school has not tackled persistent absence effectively. However, new leaders are beginning to secure tangible success. Tracking is now in place. Subsequent actions mean more pupils are attending school regularly and on time. Attendance this term is stronger than in the past three years.

Behaviour is positive. Relationships are warm and nurturing. A range of pastoral support ensures that pupils' emotional wellbeing is prioritised. This helps them manage their feelings, so they belong and thrive. Pupils happily come into school each morning. They are greeted warmly by staff who know them by name and show genuine interest in what they have done since leaving school the day before. Pupil and staff interactions reflect the positive culture created by leaders in the school. Pupils are generally well behaved during lessons and social times.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Teaching does not always support pupils to gain the knowledge they need to deepen their understanding. Teachers do not use assessment effectively to check on pupils' previous learning. This means pupils do not build on what they already know. The quality of pupils' work varies too much between classes and subjects.

Pupils learn to read through a structured phonics programme. They enjoy reading, and many pupils develop fluency and confidence. While much of the phonics programme is taught consistently, catch-up support for pupils who begin to fall behind is not always precise enough. As a result, some pupils do not develop strong foundational knowledge in reading. In addition, writing teaching does not support pupils to achieve a standard of written work that reflects their understanding of important knowledge.

The curriculum is well designed with precise knowledge and skills. Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and teaching across the school. They are now prioritising improvements with a sharp focus. Staff feel well supported to develop their practice so that it is consistently effective. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and generally explain new material clearly. The school ensures that effective adaptations often help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access tasks successfully.

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

Pupils offer a warm welcome at this friendly school. Relationships between pupils and staff are caring, supportive and nurturing. Everyone understands and follows the school's values of friendship, service, forgiveness and compassion. Leaders and staff show consistently high expectations for behaviour across the school. As a result, this is a happy and harmonious community where everybody feels a sense of belonging. The school encourages pupils to 'stop, think and wonder'. This helps pupils to be calm, respectful and resilient.

Pupils enjoy learning, and many are well prepared for their next steps. Pupils generally achieve well in national tests. However, teaching does not ensure pupils remember key knowledge or produce high-quality work in some areas of the curriculum.

The school offers thoughtful pastoral care and valuable support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). From Nursery onwards, staff identify pupils' needs and put effective help in place. Children make a joyful start in early years. Everyone is welcome here.

The school is helping pupils to improve their attendance. Since the pandemic, too many pupils have missed too much school, particularly those who are disadvantaged or pupils with SEND. Recently appointed leaders have taken prompt action to address this. Pupils are now attending better.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through well-considered assemblies and curriculum experiences. They learn to stay safe online and to be responsible in the community. A range of enrichment experiences nurture pupils' talents and interests. Highlights include the girls' futsal tournament and singing in a large national arena as part of a national choir.

Next steps

- Leaders must strengthen and embed their attendance strategy to raise all pupils' attendance rates, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information effectively to inform teaching, deepening pupils' learning and raising their achievement over time.
 - Leaders must ensure that all staff in early years have the expertise to secure high-quality interactions to help all children develop their vocabulary and communication skills by the end of Reception Year.
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About this inspection

This school is a single-academy trust.

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, staff and pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian religious character. The school received its last section 48 inspection in September 2024.

The headteacher took post in September 2025. The school has appointed two assistant headteachers since the previous inspection.

The school runs Nursery provision for 2- and 3-year-old children.

The school currently does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Richard Paez

Lead inspector:

Scott Reece, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jo Brinkley, His Majesty's Inspector

Toby Martlew, His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Cattell, 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 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

416

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)

33.79%

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

2.16%

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

17.55%

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

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 maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and maths measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	61%	Below
2024/25	59%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	56%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	40%	60%	Below

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	67%	74%	Below
2024/25	69%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	69%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	61%	73%	Below

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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	72%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	69%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	74%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	73%	Below
2024/25	72%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	61%	73%	Below
2022/23	56%	73%	Below

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 maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	43%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	52%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	28%	44%	Below

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	63%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	67%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	68%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	55%	60%	Close to average

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	67%	59%	Above
2024/25	70%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	68%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	62%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	60%	Close to average
2024/25	70%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	54%	59%	Close to average
2022/23	45%	59%	Below

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 maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	43%	68%	-24 pp
2024/25	52%	69%	-18 pp
2023/24	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23	28%	66%	-39 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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24	68%	80%	-12 pp
2022/23	55%	78%	-23 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	67%	78%	-11 pp
2024/25	70%	78%	-9 pp
2023/24	68%	78%	-10 pp
2022/23	62%	77%	-15 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in maths and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24	54%	79%	-26 pp
2022/23	45%	79%	-34 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)	8.5%	5.1%	Above
2023/24	8.2%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	7.2%	5.9%	Above

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)	23.7%	14.3%	Above
2023/24	26.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23	19.2%	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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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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