

The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy

Address: Worth Road, Ilfracombe, Devon, EX34 9JB

Unique reference number (URN): 139553

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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils' achievement has improved significantly. Overall, pupils achieve well. This is evident in the positive outcomes from national examinations at the end of key stage 4 and post-16, the high quality of pupils' work and their recall of what they have been taught.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities typically make suitable progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well, particularly in GCSE English and mathematics.

Where pupils have gaps in their knowledge these are addressed, most notably for those who cannot read at an age-appropriate level. Leaders are aware of where gaps remain and have taken suitable action to continue to address these.

Pupils are typically ready for their next stages in learning. They gain relevant qualifications which enable them to move on to destinations that are well suited to their interests and aspirations.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders understand and have successfully reduced the barriers to attendance that some pupils face. Rates of absence have decreased as a result.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' conduct. In line with the school's character values, leaders encourage pupils to treat others with kindness and respect. Staff follow a consistent approach to ensuring that pupils follow the school rules and routines. They ensure that pupils know how they should behave and why it matters. Pupils understand the consequences of not meeting leaders' high expectations for behaviour. Leaders ensure reasonable adjustments and timely support help to improve pupils' behaviour, including those who face barriers. Consequently, most pupils typically behave well and lessons are productive. However, there are too many incidents where pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are repeatedly removed from lessons because of their behaviour. While this ensures that lessons are free from distractions, it also means that some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge as a result of missed learning.

Leaders make it clear that bullying is not tolerated and instances are rare. However, some pupils, parents and carers lack confidence in how the school deals with bullying incidents and the use of inappropriate language. Pupils do not always report their concerns. Consequently, issues can sometimes persist for too long.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is broad and ambitious. Staff know what pupils should learn in each subject, at every stage. This enables pupils to build on what they have learned before. The curriculum enables key learning to be revisited so that pupils are supported to remember more of what they have been taught.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. They have developed an evidence-based approach to teaching. It takes into account the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, effectively. As a result, pupils typically learn well. Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to explain concepts clearly. They check that pupils have understood new learning and that pupils know how to improve.

Teachers ensure that they fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge, including in the most important aspects of mathematics, reading and writing. Pupils who need it get precise support that helps them to catch up quickly with reading and mathematics. The school's structured reading programme is a particular strength. It enables pupils who find reading difficult to develop fluency and confidence. However, some pupils with SEND do not consistently get the support that they need to learn as well as they could. Improving pupils' writing is a focus across the entire curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils who face barriers to learning and/or wellbeing are identified promptly and supported appropriately. Staff build productive relationships with families so that they can work together to support pupils who are experiencing difficulties. The potential barriers to participation in the wider life of the school that some pupils face are well understood by leaders. These are reduced effectively so that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or those who are disadvantaged, are fully included in extra-curricular activities.

Staff are appropriately trained to take into account pupils' needs, including those with SEND. However, they do not consistently do so. Leaders review the impact of the support that pupils receive. Where necessary, they seek advice from other professionals. Leaders bring together what they know about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance so that they can identify what is working well and what needs to improve further.

Leaders use additional funding appropriately to provide pupils with further support. Alternative provision is used when it is in pupils' best interests. However, some pupils with SEND do not consistently get the precise support that they need to succeed. Some pupils with SEND, or who are disadvantaged, miss too much learning time when they are removed from lessons due to behaviour incidents.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have brought about rapid improvements at the school. Attendance and standards of behaviour have improved. Pupils and post-16 students typically achieve well. The majority of parents and carers are positive about the changes that leaders have made.

Leaders make decisions in pupils' best interests, particularly those who are disadvantaged. They have considered the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face barriers to their learning in deciding how to best teach the curriculum. They have prioritised ensuring that pupils gain the most essential knowledge and skills for their future learning. For instance, all pupils continue to develop reading fluency and confidence throughout their time at the school. Pupils who find reading difficult receive

extensive support to catch up. This helps them to learn effectively and gain the qualifications that they need to pursue their ambitions.

Leaders ensure staff have the knowledge they need to teach the curriculum effectively, using the common teaching principles that the school expects. Frequent training enables staff to work with other professionals to develop their skills and expertise and to learn from their colleagues. Staff, including those who are at an early stage in their careers, value the training they receive. Leaders ensure staff workload is manageable. Staff have confidence in leaders. They feel valued and well supported.

The board of trustees and local governors ensure they have an accurate view of the school. They meet their statutory duties and provide effective support and challenge.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

A coherent and appropriate programme of personal development extends across the taught curriculum, wider opportunities and experiences. Pupils develop an age-appropriate knowledge of healthy, respectful relationships. They learn how to stay safe, including when online. Leaders make sure that pupils are taught about the most likely risks that they face in the local area. For instance, they frequently revisit water safety because many pupils live close to the coast.

Staff provide support for pupils' mental health and wellbeing that supports them to overcome challenges that they face. Pupils have trusted adults that they can go to if they have any worries. Pupils, parents and carers are typically confident that staff will help them with any difficulties that they have.

Pupils get opportunities to discuss their own beliefs and develop their understanding of people's perspectives and views. While most pupils are respectful and tolerant, a minority of pupils express views that are derogatory or prejudiced and not in line with British values. This leaves some pupils feeling uncomfortable. Leaders do not tolerate these instances when they are aware that they have occurred.

Leaders help pupils to develop their talents and interests through a range of clubs and events. They monitor who takes part in these activities. This means that they know that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, are making the most of these experiences and benefiting from them.

The careers education which pupils receive prepares them appropriately for their futures. It draws on local employment and education opportunities. Leaders also support pupils to raise their aspirations and to broaden their horizons. For instance, they organise trips for pupils to leading universities.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that the post-16 curriculum is designed effectively around students' needs. At subject level, they ensure curriculums cover all appropriate examination course content. Pupils are taught well. Teachers are experts in their subjects. Teaching enables students to acquire the deep knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary they need. Teachers check

what students have learned. They identify and address gaps in knowledge or misconceptions swiftly. Students are highly responsive to staff feedback and use it to improve their work and knowledge.

Students typically achieve well. They develop a secure understanding of their subjects. This is evident in the outcomes in examinations, the quality of students' work and the depth of their responses in lessons. Students who face barriers to their learning are well supported so that they can achieve well and participate in all the sixth form has to offer. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their starting points.

Students are generally ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. The school provides students with the guidance they need to choose destinations that meet their interests, career goals and aspirations. The programme for personal development helps students feel well prepared for life beyond school.

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

Pupils recognise and appreciate the improved behaviour and support for their achievement at Ilfracombe Academy. Most pupils enjoy school and attend well. The school is a friendly place where pupils cooperate well with one another and feel safe. Pupils are supported to get off to a positive start each day. Staff welcome pupils and ensure that they have the equipment that they need. This helps to build a sense of belonging and ensures that pupils are ready to learn.

Pupils are keen to do well. They listen attentively to staff and complete work that they are proud of. Disruption to learning is not tolerated. In lessons, pupils concentrate on their work. Outcomes in national examinations have improved significantly. Pupils increasingly gain the knowledge that they need to achieve well.

Pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing are usually well supported. They know that staff will try to help them to reduce barriers that they face. Teaching typically takes into account the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although bullying is rare, a minority of pupils, parents and carers lack confidence in how leaders respond to it when instances occur.

The broad offer of extra-curricular opportunities helps pupils to experience 'life in all its fullness'. Opportunities include a range of sports and art activities and trips. For example, pupils recently proudly performed a play for local primary school children and visited Oxford University. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged are supported to take part in these activities.

Pupils learn the importance of taking responsibility for themselves and the impact that their actions have on others. They are taught about tolerance and respect. This helps to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are consistently provided for in lessons so that these pupils are supported to make the best possible progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders should further support pupils to improve their behaviour so that fewer pupils miss learning and accumulate gaps in knowledge when removed from lessons or are suspended from school.
 - Leaders should ensure that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively so that pupils, parents and carers have greater confidence that such incidents will not continue.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Athena Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ben Parnell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Elaine Marshall.

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 leaders from the school and the multi-academy trust, with those responsible for governance, to a representative of the diocese and to a representative of the local authority during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 2 alternative provisions for a small number of pupils. Both alternative provisions are registered.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection of the school took place in October 2024.

Principal: Stephen Rogers

Lead inspector:

Sarah Favager-Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Matthew Collins, Ofsted Inspector

Leanne Mills, Ofsted Inspector

Sophie Laing, Ofsted Inspector

Lee Sargeant, 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**

1,011

Close to 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: 1,067

School capacity

1,200

Close to 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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

25.14%

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: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.67%

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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.55%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well 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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	50.6%	45.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59.2%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38.5%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	47.8	45.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50.8	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	42.8	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.48	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	-0.54	-0.03	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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	25.5%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	11.1%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	35.8	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38.9	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	27.6	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.01	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	-1.35	-0.57	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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	25.5%	52.8%	-27.3 pp
2023/24 (final)	31.3%	53.1%	-21.9 pp
2022/23 (final)	11.1%	52.4%	-41.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	35.8	50.3	-14.5

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	38.9	50.0	-11.1
2022/23 (final)	27.6	50.3	-22.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	0.01	0.16	-0.15
2022/23 (final)	-1.35	0.17	-1.52

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	85%	91%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	86%	94%	Below

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	36.81	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30.19	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.38	34.16	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.2	0.0	Above
2023/24 (revised)	0.0	0.0	Close to average

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)	8.7%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.0%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.4%	9.0%	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 (2 term)	25.7%	21.9%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	31.7%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	32.7%	26.5%	Above

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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