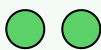


St Thomas Cantilupe CofE Academy

Address: Coningsby Street, Hereford, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 2DY

Unique reference number (URN): 140183

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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders are relentlessly focused on pupils' attendance. Pupils attend school very regularly. Overall attendance is well above national figures, and persistent absence is very low. Pupils enjoy being in school and speak positively about their learning and friendships. Families understand the importance of good attendance, and this is reflected in excellent attendance rates across all year groups. Pupils want to be here. Most pupils come to school every day and on time, which helps them to make good progress and take part in all aspects of school life, including clubs and enrichment activities.

Behaviour across the school is calm and respectful. Pupils follow routines that are well implemented by staff. They move around the school sensibly. In lessons, they listen carefully and work hard, creating a positive environment for learning. Pupils treat each other and adults with courtesy and kindness. Bullying is rare, and pupils say that if it happens, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils feel safe and supported, and they show positive attitudes to learning in all areas of school life. They take pride in their work and enjoy contributing to the school community. The school is consistently calm, orderly and welcoming.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children in the early years benefit from a well-designed and ambitious curriculum that gives them the best possible start to school. Staff focus on developing children's language and vocabulary through high-quality interactions. Stories, rhymes and songs are used every day to build confidence and enjoyment in speaking and listening. Children are encouraged to talk in full sentences and share their ideas, which helps them develop strong communication skills.

Phonics begins early and is taught in a clear and structured way so that children quickly learn to read. Mathematics is also a priority. Children use practical resources to explore number, shape and patterns, helping them to understand key ideas before moving on to more formal learning. Staff carefully choose activities so that children can play, explore and learn new skills in a calm and well-organised environment.

Staff check what children know and can do and provide extra support when needed. They make sure that all children, including those who need additional help, take part in learning and make progress. Outdoor spaces are used well to give children opportunities to be active and curious.

By the end of Reception, most children are confident, independent and ready for Year 1. They have secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics and enjoy learning. Leaders ensure that parents and carers have the information they need about their children's progress and experiences.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders make sure that every pupil feels valued and supported. Staff identify pupils' individual needs quickly, including those who join the school at times other than the beginning of the school year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those who face other challenges receive help that enables them to learn alongside their peers.

Teachers adapt lessons thoughtfully so pupils can take part fully. This includes using clear explanations, visual prompts and extra adult support when needed. Interventions, such as additional reading practice, are planned carefully and checked to make sure they make a difference to pupils' knowledge.

Funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. It supports learning and provides opportunities such as access to clubs and music tuition. Leaders track who takes part in these activities and act when some pupils are missing out. Vulnerable pupils are prioritised to ensure they can access opportunities and are supported well, in and outside of school.

Staff work closely with families and outside specialists to give pupils the right help at the right time. Training for staff means they understand pupils' needs and how to support them effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are included in all aspects of school life and make good progress.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a clear vision for the school and work hard to make sure every pupil achieves well and feels valued. They know the school's strengths and areas for improvement and take decisions that are in the best interests of pupils. Leaders make sure that staff have the training they need to teach effectively and support pupils' learning. They also take care to manage staff's workload and wellbeing, which helps create a positive and stable environment for pupils. Staff speak very positively about working at the school. They feel well supported. Leaders work closely with parents and the wider community. They listen to feedback and involve families in school life.

Governance is effective. Governors and trust leaders understand their responsibilities and check carefully that the school is doing the right things for pupils. They ask challenging questions and provide support when needed. Governors make sure that resources are used well and that safeguarding is a top priority.

The trust's commitment to developing staff's professional learning and expertise is particularly impactful. It provides high-quality training for all staff. This training is based on research. Teachers have access to high-quality training and opportunities to develop their skills. This helps ensure that pupils receive a broad and ambitious curriculum and that teaching continues to improve. The school also shares its expertise with other schools in the trust.

As a result of strong leadership and governance, pupils learn in a safe, caring and well-organised school where expectations are high and success is celebrated.

The school provides a vast range of opportunities to nurture pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have a broad and rich set of experiences. They learn how to be respectful, responsible and confident members of the community. The school helps pupils understand right and wrong, value differences and show kindness. Pupils talk thoughtfully about fairness and demonstrate these qualities in their daily interactions. They know how to work with others, listen to different opinions and resolve disagreements calmly.

Opportunities beyond lessons are wide-ranging and enrich pupils' experiences. Many pupils take part in the school choir and local festivals. Links with cultural organisations, such as a local book festival and a cathedral, give pupils experiences they might not otherwise have. Clubs are varied and open to everyone, helping pupils develop interests in sport, art and other activities. Older pupils take on leadership roles, such as on the school council and eco-committee, which build confidence and a sense of responsibility. Pupils are proud of the contributions that they have made to school life, such as improvements to playground equipment.

Pupils learn how to stay healthy and safe. They understand the importance of exercise, healthy eating and looking after their mental health. Lessons and special events teach pupils about online safety and how to manage risks in everyday life. Relationships and health education is taught clearly and sensitively, so pupils know how to form positive friendships and treat others with respect. Pupils also learn about fundamental British values and celebrate diversity through assemblies and themed events.

By the time they leave, pupils are confident, resilient and ready for the next stage of education. They have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and to contribute positively to society.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Typically, they learn the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. They develop strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, which helps them to succeed in other subjects. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully. Pupils who need additional support receive focused teaching that builds their knowledge, confidence and independence. Across subjects, pupils' written work and discussions show that pupils revisit and build on previous learning.

Pupils read with growing confidence and accuracy and show secure mathematical fluency, including in multiplication tables. Disadvantaged pupils achieve better than disadvantaged pupils nationally, although there is still a gap compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, particularly in reading.

Across the wider curriculum, pupils gain the knowledge they need in subjects such as science, history and art. Their work is generally of appropriate quality and shows their understanding of key ideas. However, higher-attaining pupils do not consistently reach the highest standards in these subjects. Overall, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have planned a broad and balanced curriculum that gives pupils the knowledge and skills they need for the future. Reading, writing and mathematics are clear priorities. Phonics is taught in a structured way so that pupils learn to read quickly and confidently. In mathematics, pupils build their understanding, including with the use of practical resources and teachers providing clear explanations. Teachers revisit previous learning regularly so pupils remember important ideas and apply them in new contexts.

Across most subjects, lessons are well organised and pupils learn in a calm environment. Teachers explain new concepts clearly and check pupils' understanding during lessons. They adapt tasks so that pupils who need extra help can take part fully. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their vocabulary and speaking skills, which supports learning across the curriculum. Pupils enjoy creative subjects such as music and art, and all have the chance to learn a musical instrument.

Leaders have identified that high-quality teaching is not always consistent in every subject. Occasionally, when pupils develop misconceptions, these are not fully corrected before learning moves on. Pupils typically progress well through the curriculum. Learning activities do not always enable all pupils to deepen their knowledge. This is particularly the case for higher-attaining pupils.

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

St Thomas Cantilupe CofE Academy is an inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils start their day in a calm and warm environment. Staff greet families at the gate, and pupils enter school happily and settle quickly into their routines. They feel safe and cared for and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Parents describe the school as friendly and supportive, and pupils agree that adults listen to them and take their views seriously. The school's vision is understood by all. Staff have high expectations and are ambitious for all pupils to shine.

Behaviour is positive throughout the school. Pupils understand what is expected of them and follow routines sensibly. They treat each other and adults with respect, and classrooms are calm and focused. Bullying is rare, and pupils say that if it happens, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils enjoy being part of a community where kindness and fairness matter.

Learning is purposeful and engaging. Pupils talk confidently about their work and enjoy lessons. They are proud of their achievements and want to do well. From the moment children start in early years, they develop strong skills in reading, writing and mathematics,

which help them succeed across the curriculum. Pupils who need extra help are supported so they can fully take part in school life.

Beyond the classroom, pupils have many opportunities to explore their interests. They take part in music, art and cultural events. Clubs and leadership roles, including on the school council and eco-committee, help pupils develop confidence and responsibility.

Attendance is excellent. Pupils rarely miss school because they enjoy learning and value the wide range of experiences on offer. By the time they leave, pupils are confident, resilient and ready for the next stage of education. They know how to work with others, respect differences and contribute positively to their community.

Next steps

- Leaders should take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils develop a deeper knowledge of the curriculum, ensuring consistency in checking pupils' understanding by addressing all misconceptions effectively.
 - Leaders should maintain their strong focus on closing attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils compared with their non-disadvantaged peers in the school.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Canon Andrew Teale, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Rob Pizii.

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 school leaders, including the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and other leaders. They also spoke with representatives of the trust including trust leaders, trustees and members of the local governing body during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Hereford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in September 2025. The next inspection will be within 5 years of the last section 48 inspection.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Matt Fletcher, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Martin Spoor, Ofsted Inspector

Heather Simpson, 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

243

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: 272

School capacity

264

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: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

26.92%

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

2.88%

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

18.52%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

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

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	76%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	84%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	89%	74%	Above
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	84%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	89%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	89%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	86%	73%	Above
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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	71%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	43%	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	76%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	100%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	71%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	58%	Above

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	76%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	86%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	71%	67%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	43%	66%	-23 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	76%	80%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	100%	80%	20 pp
2022/23 (final)	71%	78%	-7 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	71%	78%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	78%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	71%	78%	-6 pp
2022/23 (final)	71%	77%	-6 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	76%	80%	-4 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	86%	79%	6 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	71%	79%	-8 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 (2 term)	3.7%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.1%	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)	8.5%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.4%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	12.4%	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 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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