

St Matthews Church of England Academy

Address: St Matthew's Ce Academy, Lightwood Road, Rough Close, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST3 7NE

Unique reference number (URN): 140299

Inspection report: 24 February 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

Inclusion

Strong standard 

The school puts inclusion at the centre of everything it does. This makes sure every child feels welcome, understood and supported. Staff take the time to get to know each pupil well. They spot any needs early so that pupils get the right help straight away. This includes pupils who may be disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils who are known to social care or those who face other challenges. This caring approach helps pupils feel valued and confident in school.

Staff have high expectations for every child and a shared belief that all pupils can achieve. They carefully adapt lessons so that every learner can join in and succeed. Staff receive training that helps them understand how best to support pupils' differing needs. This means that pupils get thoughtful and effective help in the classroom. Leaders check carefully how well pupils are doing. They use clear systems to review what is working. As a result, staff adjust support quickly if a child needs something different.

Leaders use additional funding wisely to support disadvantaged pupils. They choose strategies that are proven to make a difference. Staff work hard to remove barriers so that all pupils have the chance to do well and feel part of the school community. This creates a positive, supportive atmosphere where every child can thrive.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Most pupils progress well through the curriculum as they move through the school. The curriculum helps them to build their knowledge and skills across subjects. Staff teach the essential foundations in reading, writing and mathematics well. Where there are any gaps, teaching addresses these well. In phonics, pupils make secure progress and build well on their existing knowledge. This includes pupils who join with low starting points. Targeted interventions help most pupils to achieve well. This means that, over time, pupils read with greater fluency, and their understanding of what they read significantly improves.

Pupils typically develop a breadth of knowledge across the curriculum. They generally secure the essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps pupils to be ready for their next steps in learning. Leaders prioritise communication skills from the start, which supports pupils' learning across all year groups. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have low starting points catch up and learn the knowledge they need. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils achieve well due to the school's inclusive practices and effective support.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders take a proactive approach to improving attendance. They use a range of strategies to spot concerns early and offer timely support. Their analysis of whole-school and group attendance trends helps them to act quickly and tailor their support. These actions help to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. Leaders understand pupils' needs well and take effective steps to secure better attendance, particularly for those who need it most. They identify the barriers to attendance that some pupils face, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils or those facing challenging circumstances. They make thoughtful adjustments through a range of targeted strategies that have led to clear improvements in attendance over time.

Pupils behave well across the school. Leaders' high expectations create a calm, purposeful and positive atmosphere. As a result, classrooms are settled and focused. Pupils follow routines confidently and show positive attitudes to learning. This is because staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Staff model the respectful relationships they expect from pupils. Leaders use a range of strategies to address any emerging concerns swiftly. This reduces any barriers to learning effectively. Leaders make thoughtful and effective adjustments for pupils who need them, including some pupils with SEND. Incidents involving bullying or discrimination are extremely rare. Pupils trust staff to act quickly when needed. As a result, they feel safe, behave kindly and contribute positively to a harmonious school community.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of how well the curriculum and teaching are working across the school. They know what needs to improve and take effective steps to make this happen. This means that more pupils gain the essential skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders ensure that the curriculum in every subject is well planned, ambitious and carefully sequenced. This means that most pupils gain knowledge that is built on what they have already learned.

Reading is a priority from the very start. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive effective support to develop early reading skills. An established phonics programme is taught well because leaders make sure that staff have the training and knowledge they need. Pupils practise reading books that match the sounds they know. Typically, this helps them to become confident and fluent readers by the end of key stage 2.

Teachers receive the training and support they need to develop secure subject knowledge. This is beginning to help them teach the curriculum with confidence and clarity. Staff know pupils well. They adapt teaching thoughtfully where needed, including for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND and others who may face barriers to learning. Typically, checks on pupils' learning are used well. Teachers check pupils' understanding and address any gaps accordingly. This helps pupils to catch up with essential learning where needed. However, this is not always the case in writing, where some mistakes are not corrected quickly enough.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the early years. The curriculum is carefully designed and sequenced. This means that most children build knowledge in a logical, secure way. Leaders carefully plan opportunities for children to talk, listen and share ideas. Staff engage children in high-quality interactions that extend vocabulary. Leaders maintain the same high expectations for early learning as the standards set across the school. This includes the school's effective work to support children with lower starting points. As a result, most children develop secure foundations in learning.

Reading is a clear priority. From the start of Reception, children learn phonics daily. Increasingly, they apply their knowledge to read unfamiliar words and develop early writing skills. Staff provide varied opportunities for children to practise new learning. Typically, this helps them consolidate key skills through well-planned activities.

Partnerships with parents and carers are effective. Leaders provide opportunities, such as workshops and newsletters, to involve families in learning. This means that staff know each child's starting points well. They adapt learning to meet individual needs, including for disadvantaged children, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing wider challenges. Children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured through calm routines and a safe, supportive environment. This helps children to grow in confidence and independence.

Leaders regularly review, monitor and evaluate the provision to ensure continuous improvement. Effective transition arrangements mean that children are well prepared for Year 1.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. This is rooted in a deep understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders have identified clear priorities for improvement, which are beginning to make a positive difference across all aspects of school life. Leaders' clear vision is shared by staff, pupils and the wider community. This drives the development of the curriculum, which is now being delivered with increasing consistency.

Governors and trustees play an active role to ensure that the school runs safely, efficiently and with pupils' best interests at the centre. They meet their statutory duties, for example in holding leaders to account in important areas such as attendance. Governors support and challenge leaders well. For instance, they check how resources are used to improve pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Leaders consistently take decisions that prioritise pupils. They know the school's context well and make thoughtful decisions that put pupils first, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities or face other challenges. This ensures every child has the best possible chance to succeed and feel supported.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They benefit from a high-quality, evidence-informed professional development programme that builds expertise across the

school. Leaders protect time for this training and act to keep workload manageable. They promote staff wellbeing through the school's supportive culture and manageable marking practices.

Relationships with parents, carers and the community are very positive. Leaders and governors communicate openly and build trust. They use these partnerships very effectively to help pupils achieve well and feel valued.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a thoughtful and well-organised personal development programme. It helps develop pupils' learning beyond the academic. Leaders plan these learning and wider experiences carefully. For instance, pupils reflect on their beliefs, understand right and wrong and consider how their actions affect others. They talk maturely about mental health and show respect for people's feelings, faiths and backgrounds.

Leaders promote cooperation, kindness and responsibility through daily routines and assemblies. Activities such as the buddy system encourage older pupils to support younger children. These opportunities help pupils build social skills and practise values such as respect, love and perseverance. Pupils learn about democracy in real and meaningful ways, for example when they vote for 'golden time' activities.

Generally, the curriculum broadens pupils' cultural awareness through learning about world religions and through trips linked directly to the curriculum, for example trips to a local pottery museum and around the local area. These experiences deepen pupils' understanding of heritage and diversity. They spark pupils' interest in areas such as art, history and science. A wide range of clubs, including 'busy bees' and several sports clubs, help to develop pupils' interests and confidence.

The relationships curriculum is well planned. It equips pupils with the essential knowledge to stay safe, healthy and respectful. Pupils know how to stay safe online and understand the importance of speaking to trusted staff when worried. Careers learning raises pupils' aspirations, for example girls interested in engineering. Older pupils are proud of the part they play in school life through their role in the leadership team.

The school's pastoral support is a significant strength. Staff know families well and respond quickly when extra help is needed. Leaders make sensitive adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those from different cultural or faith backgrounds. Leaders ensure every child can take part in enrichment, trips and personal development opportunities. This creates a supportive, inclusive environment where all pupils flourish.

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

Pupils are happy and confident and thrive at St Matthews because they are surrounded by warm, caring staff who know them exceptionally well. Classrooms are calm, purposeful places. Pupils enjoy learning and feel proud of what they achieve. This starts in the early

years, where children quickly learn routines. This helps them to feel safe and settled. Across the school, pupils and staff are proud to be part of a community where everyone is encouraged to do their best.

Pupils flourish in the school's inclusive and nurturing culture. Staff understand pupils' needs deeply. They recognise the important role the school plays in supporting families. Positive relationships help pupils feel they truly belong. Many pupils attend well. Leaders work closely with families to overcome any barriers to regular attendance. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The school creates a nurturing environment where children feel safe, secure and happy.'

Pupils learn a broad, rich and well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders identify quickly any barriers to learning that pupils may face and provide timely and effective support. This means that most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, typically achieve well from their starting points. Pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need. This means they are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

The school's ambition for pupils goes beyond their academic learning. The school's values are the golden thread that runs through everything. Pupils enjoy a range of experiences that broaden their horizons, from trips and clubs to supporting the local food bank. They take pride in contributing to school life, especially as part of the pupil leadership team. These opportunities help them develop confidence, responsibility and kindness. Leaders are determined that these experiences have a lasting impact on pupils when they leave St Matthews.

Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that the agreed high-quality teaching approaches and expectations are consistently embedded in all year groups and across the curriculum, particularly in writing.
- Leaders should provide more opportunities for pupils to develop secure, detailed understanding across the personal development curriculum, especially in learning about different faiths and cultures.

About this inspection

This school is part of St Chad's Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sarah Cockshott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Harry Azima. The regional hub lead is Karen Taylor.

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 school leaders, including the regional hub lead and the trust headteacher. They also spoke with representatives of the trust, including the deputy CEO, and representatives of the local governing committee 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 most recent section 48 inspection of the school was carried out in April 2024.

The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Trust Headteacher : Jennifer Mountford

Lead inspector:

Su Plant, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Susan Ray, 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 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

84

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

105

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

23.38%

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

4.76%

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

11.90%

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	66%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	56%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	87%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	94%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	44%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	92%	73%	Above

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	S	46%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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	S	62%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	S	59%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	S	60%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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	S	68%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	S	78%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	6.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	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)	15.7%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	13.8%	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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