

Sythwood Primary and Nursery School

Address: Sythwood, Horsell, Woking, Surrey, GU21 3AX

Unique reference number (URN): 140509

Inspection report: 6 May 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 

On the whole, pupils achieve well. They make steady progress from their starting points. Pupils' outcomes in national tests are broadly in line with national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. This means that pupils are generally ready for the next stage of their education.

Leaders prioritise English and mathematics. The teaching of phonics is embedded. This means that pupils learn to read well. The quality of pupils' handwriting is more variable. Leaders have introduced a new programme of learning to address this. This is continuing to be embedded. Where pupils have gaps in their learning, these are generally identified and addressed and are closing quickly.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, largely secure the knowledge they need across the curriculum. Cross-curricular topics, such as a key stage 2 project related to global trade, help pupils to build connections between subjects such as mathematics and geography.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils generally attend school regularly. Attendance has improved for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and is in line with national figures. Persistent absence has reduced and is now close to average. Leaders have high expectations for attendance. They put in place clear policies and procedures for attendance that everyone understands. Leaders work closely with families when a pupil's attendance needs to improve. Support is prioritised. For example, leaders fund an early risers club that encourages pupils to be punctual and attend regularly.

Pupils behave well at Sythwood. They arrive happily and settle quickly to their learning. Rules and routines are embedded. This is because staff have high expectations for pupil behaviour. Pupils have positive relationships with staff that are kind and respectful. This helps to create a learning environment where pupils feel they belong. Children in the early years play and learn with enthusiasm. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Staff put in place adjustments to support pupils who need them. This helps to reduce barriers for pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils consider bullying to be rare. However, they trust staff to help them if there is a problem. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. Leaders act quickly when incidents are reported.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand their school well. They have used this knowledge to develop a curriculum that is suitable for pupils and their needs. The curriculum is well sequenced. It allows pupils to build their understanding in small steps over time and make helpful connections in their learning.

Leaders prioritise the core skills of English and mathematics. Leaders have embedded their approach to teaching reading, including phonics. This means pupils learn to read well. Pupils with gaps in their basic knowledge are helped to catch up quickly. The quality of pupils' handwriting is less consistent. Leaders have introduced a new handwriting programme across the school. While the impact of this can be seen in some year groups, it needs more time to be fully embedded.

Generally, staff teach the curriculum well. Staff use agreed 'Sythwood Way' teaching approaches. This helps to ensure that learning is presented clearly to pupils. Leaders have prioritised ongoing training and support to ensure that staff have the expertise they need to teach the curriculum effectively.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and can do. On the whole, staff use this information to adapt the curriculum for pupils. When this is the case, pupils achieve well. For some pupils, particularly those with visual impairments, staff ensure that adaptations are sharply aligned to pupils' needs. However, sometimes pupils do not receive the curriculum adaptations they need to enable them to achieve as well as they could.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the early years. This is because they understand how this stage of learning impacts children's future success. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed. It aligns with statutory requirements and is informed by children's needs. For example, staff have identified a need to focus on developing children's language skills.

The curriculum is generally taught well. Staff check what children are learning and identify gaps. This helps them to plan learning activities that enable children to make positive progress across all areas of the curriculum. Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. This is because leaders prioritise regular, bespoke training. Staff engage children in high-quality interactions. This helps children to communicate effectively and widen their vocabulary. Occasionally, these interactions are not as closely aligned to what staff know about children and the intended learning. This means staff do not move learning forward as effectively as they could.

Children engage well with their learning. They focus carefully on independent and adult-led activities. For example, children make puppets and retell the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' after learning about traditional tales. Leaders ensure that staff prioritise children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result, children are confident and sociable. They make steady progress from their starting points. They are generally well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is an inclusive school. Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. Leaders identify additional needs quickly and accurately. This helps staff to plan and implement strategies to reduce pupils' barriers to learning and wellbeing.

Leaders prioritise high-quality teaching for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They provide additional support if pupils need it. Staff receive

effective ongoing training and development. This ensures that they are well equipped to help pupils to make progress in their learning.

Mostly, staff use the school's agreed approaches to support pupils with additional needs well. However, this is not consistently applied. Sometimes, staff do not adapt learning precisely enough for some pupils. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Staff support pupils with visual impairments, who attend the school's resourced provision, particularly well. These pupils receive high-quality specialist support and interventions. This enables them to learn effectively in the classroom alongside their peers. As a result, these pupils thrive.

Leaders use additional funding appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils. They check the quality of provision so they can make adaptations in the best interests of pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear vision for the school. They have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Leaders act in the best interests of all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They identify areas for improvement accurately and take robust action to address them. As a result, the school makes steady progress on its priorities.

Governors and trustees share leaders' vision for the school. They understand the context and needs of the pupils they serve. They provide leaders with support and challenge to secure the best outcomes for pupils. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They carry out activities to check and assure themselves that safeguarding practices are effective.

The school's professional learning offer is carefully designed. There is a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders use an evidence-informed approach to develop the skills of all staff. They draw on the trust and wider organisations to provide comprehensive training. Specialist training enables staff to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, such as those with visual impairments and autistic spectrum disorder, effectively.

Wellbeing and workload are prioritised. Leaders consider this carefully when planning new initiatives. As a result, staff praise the leadership of the school and feel supported in their roles.

Leaders build effective relationships with parents and carers. They keep parents informed. As a result, parents are reassured that the school acts in the best interests of their child. They speak positively of the school and its leadership.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is thoughtfully considered. Through the curriculum, wider opportunities and experiences, pupils are generally well prepared for life beyond school. The programme is an entitlement for all pupils.

Pupils generally remember what they have learned. In some areas, this knowledge is detailed. For example, pupils confidently explain the difference between legal and illegal substances alongside the risks associated with vaping. Pupils' recall of some parts of the curriculum, such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, is less secure, however.

Staff adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with visual impairments receive specialist support to develop life skills and build independence.

Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to explore their talents and interests. Extra-curricular activities are plentiful and popular. Staff track participation and ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have SEND, can participate. Educational visits complement the taught curriculum. They provide memorable learning experiences. For example, pupils recall in detail a trip to an amusement park that helped them to learn more about forces.

Pupils are taught to be responsible and confident. They embrace diversity and respect differences. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Discrimination and abuse are not tolerated. Incidents are infrequent. However, leaders and staff act quickly to address them when they occur.

Pastoral support is an important part of the school's inclusive provision. Specialist trained staff provide personalised support, while the young carers club offers a calm space for pupils to relax and talk to their peers. Leaders are proactive in offering support. Pupils know they can ask for help if they need it. This ensures that pupils feel safe and cared for.

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

Pupils arrive happily here, every day. They enjoy attending this inclusive school where leaders and staff are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Pupils attend well. Attendance has improved and fewer pupils are persistently absent. Staff support those pupils who need help to attend school well, for example by offering morning clubs and activities that pupils enjoy. This helps pupils to arrive on time, to feel safe and to feel that they belong in school.

On the whole, pupils make steady progress from their starting points and achieve well. Staff generally present learning clearly. They check on what pupils know and understand and make suitable adjustments to help them to learn more effectively. Support for some pupils with additional needs, such as those with visual impairments, is particularly successful.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They settle quickly to their learning. The youngest children approach activities in the early years with enthusiasm and concentration. Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement in their learning, particularly when teaching is closely matched to their needs. During social times, pupils enjoy a wide range of activities and play together contentedly. Pupils told inspectors that they are never lonely at Sythwood because there is always someone to play with. Bullying is rare. They know whom to go to if they need help or support. Consequently, pupils feel safe and cared for.

Pupils take part in activities that broaden their interests and experiences. For example, pupils describe how educational visits to local places of interest help to develop their understanding of the curriculum. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities such as sports, crafts and singing. These opportunities, alongside the taught curriculum, help to prepare pupils well for the future.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff use their knowledge of pupils to adapt the curriculum effectively, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, so that all pupils achieve as well as they could.
 - Leaders should ensure that opportunities for high-quality interactions are maximised and sharply aligned to the intended learning to further support the development of children's language and communication skills across all aspects of the early years curriculum.
 - Leaders should embed recent changes to the handwriting curriculum so that pupils develop fluency and accuracy in transcription skills.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Bourne Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alex Russell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Field.

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 and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with other leaders, trust representatives, local governing committee members, staff and pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school includes specially resourced provision for 7 pupils with visual impairments.

The school currently makes use of one alternative provision that is unregistered.

Headteacher: Nicola Matheson

Lead inspector:

Anneka Fisher, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mineza Maher, Ofsted Inspector

Lucy Phillips, Ofsted Inspector

James Baguley, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

527

Well 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

510

Well 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)

34.93%

Above 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

5.69%

Above 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

24.10%

Well 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

VI - Visual Impairment

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	63%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	61%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	60%	Close to average

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	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	85%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average

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 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	71%	71%	Close to average

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	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	41%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	36%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42%	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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	72%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	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	52%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	52%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	48%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	74%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	58%	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	41%	68%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	69%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	67%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	42%	66%	-24 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	67%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	72%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	70%	80%	-9 pp
2022/23 (final)	61%	78%	-17 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	52%	78%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	52%	78%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	48%	78%	-29 pp
2022/23 (final)	55%	77%	-23 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	63%	80%	-17 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	81%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	74%	79%	-5 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	58%	79%	-21 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 (3 term)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.1%	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 (3 term)	12.7%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	24.6%	16.2%	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.

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