

Dovedale Community Primary School

Address: Herondale Road, L18 1JX

Unique reference number (URN): 141960

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils relish being part of the positive environment that leaders have established. This helps to foster pupils' high levels of attendance. Most pupils are in school each day and on time. Leaders carefully track any pupil absences. They take effective action when pupils face barriers to attending school regularly. Staff work successfully with families and external agencies to help pupils to engage fully with school life.

Pupils behave especially well, including in lessons and during social times. Bullying is extremely rare. The school takes prompt and effective action should any incidents occur. Pupils are well mannered and highly respectful towards their peers, adults and school visitors. The school is calm and orderly throughout. There are well-established routines that start from the beginning of the early years. Pupils work with staff to determine classroom rules, which helps them to understand staff's expectations. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers, following instructions and taking pride in the work that they produce. Staff make careful adjustments to enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to take part successfully in learning and in social activities.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The curriculum is ambitious, well thought through and expertly designed to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Pupils make meaningful and sophisticated connections between subjects. For example they connect their learning in science to art and English, and music to poetry and history. Leaders and staff have high expectations and challenge pupils to achieve their best.

Leaders make sure that staff support the wellbeing and learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. This is highly effective and well thought out. Teachers ensure that activities are adapted effectively to meet pupils' needs. Use of specialist equipment supports pupils to be able to access the learning.

Staff make thoughtful and prompt checks on pupils' understanding to guide subsequent teaching. Teaching is highly effective and informed by educational research. Leaders ensure that staff's professional development is prioritised and expertly delivered. This ensures that staff have the knowledge and confidence to deliver the curriculum well. Leaders act swiftly to address the school's priorities, such as improving pupils' handwriting. They monitor the impact of their work carefully.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders demonstrate an unwavering commitment to inclusion. Disadvantages that pupils may face are carefully considered. Leaders undertake a detailed analysis of each pupil's individual needs and starting points. They act on this information with precision. Additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' learning in lessons. Leaders also make judicious use of alternative provision where appropriate. They work closely with those

responsible to ensure that there is continuity and quality of education for pupils in care. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and other groups achieve well over time in most subjects.

The school has well-developed expertise in supporting pupils who have experienced bereavement. Leaders deploy sensitive, well-considered strategies that prioritise pupils' emotional wellbeing alongside their academic progress. This compassionate and proactive approach helps pupils to rebuild confidence and maintain a sense of belonging.

Staff follow a clear approach to identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The impact of the support provided is reviewed carefully with other professionals, parents and carers. Senior leaders evaluate the wider impact of the school's inclusion work with determination and skill, ensuring that pupils with SEND are fully involved in all aspects of school life. This relentless focus ensures that pupils thrive.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leadership is highly effective and drives sustained improvement. Leaders understand the priorities and many strengths of the school. They are strategic, reflective and responsive. Leaders actively support other schools and providers in the local area.

Staff are equally well supported. They share a clear sense of purpose. Safeguarding, inclusion and personal development are prioritised and embedded across the school. Leaders focus on the school's rich and broad curriculum as the bedrock of what they do. They are clear that if they get this right, pupils will want to be in school, keen to learn and acquire the skills they need for future success. Leaders are successful in delivering this for all pupils.

Governors are knowledgeable and proactive. They provide highly effective oversight. Leaders use evidence to guide their decisions. They act swiftly when needed. Professional development is high quality and tailored to staff's needs, including for those at the beginning of their career. The school is thriving under confident, capable leadership that puts pupils at the heart of all that it does.

Personal development and well-being

Strong standard 

Leaders' support for pupils' broader development is highly effective. Pupils benefit from a rich programme to promote their personal development. This programme is well informed by the school's local context. Pupils have a detailed understanding of online safety, gaming, stranger danger, drugs and road safety. They can explain strategies to keep themselves safe in different situations. Pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of relationships and emotions through a well-structured relationships and sex education and health education programme.

Pupils develop their talents through attending an impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities, such as philosophy, choir and cheerleading clubs. Leaders consider the needs and interests of all pupils when designing these activities. They are proactive in

ensuring that there is equal access for all groups, including pupils who are vulnerable. Participation rates are high.

The offer for pupils to learn about different careers is aspirational. Pupils talk knowledgeably about future ambitions and the qualifications required to reach their goals. Pastoral support for pupils and their families is a strength of the school. Leaders understand pupils' needs well and provide extensive support. This makes a significant difference to pupils' wellbeing and physical development.

Diversity is deeply valued and widely celebrated by all. Pupils benefit from opportunities to engage with members of different faith communities and visit places of worship. They compare similarities and differences between world religions and reflect on how this knowledge shapes their daily lives. Pupils across school show respect for each other. They support their peers and demonstrate pride in their achievements. They are advocates of equality and equity. Pupils confidently articulate how fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance, are lived out through the curriculum.

These experiences, combined with extensive enrichment opportunities, ensure that pupils are remarkably well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well across the school and are confident learners. Staff have high expectations and challenge pupils to do their best. Pupils are proud of their work and talk confidently about their learning. Reading is a strength. Pupils enjoy books and talk about them with enthusiasm. Typically, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well prepared for future learning.

In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils build strong foundations on which to build further learning, as a result of consistently effective teaching. This is typically reflected in the school's above-average published outcomes in reading and writing at the end of Year 6 and in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, over time, pupils' attainment in mathematics, although exceeding national attainment measures, has not been as high as in other subjects. Leaders are working effectively to bring about improvements so that current pupils make greater gains in their mathematics knowledge.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years curriculum is ambitious and well organised. It builds children's knowledge and skills effectively. Planned activities help children grasp curriculum concepts securely. Staff model important vocabulary consistently well. Most children use this language accurately in different areas of learning, showing a secure understanding. Overall, children achieve well. However, on occasion, staff do not step in quickly enough to draw children into

purposeful conversation or play. This means a small number of children miss opportunities to deepen their learning or develop their communication skills.

Teachers start phonics teaching promptly in the Reception Year and deliver it well. Staff inspire a love for stories and books. They help children learn the sounds and letters needed to read and write confidently. Opportunities to consolidate and practise this learning are built across the school day. Targeted support helps those children who need extra help. As a result, most children become fluent readers, who are well prepared for Year 1 and beyond.

From the get-go, staff build warm, trusting relationships with families. They closely collaborate with parents, carers and professionals to identify children's additional needs early. Relationships between adults and children are consistently caring. This creates a clear sense of security and belonging.

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

Pupils are proud to be a part of Dovedale Primary. They arrive at school eager to see what the day ahead holds. Pupils are keen to support one another. Wellbeing ambassadors and 'rocket resilience champions' are just two examples of the many opportunities that pupils have to take on leadership roles. Those who are elected to such roles demonstrate high levels of confidence and make a tangible difference to the running of the school.

Pupils feel safe. They attend school regularly. Pupils state that bullying is rare but are confident that if an issue arose, staff would sort it out quickly. Pupils behave extremely well during lessons and at social times. They speak enthusiastically about the school being a welcoming place, where they are treated as individuals. This means they can be themselves.

The vast array of opportunities on offer to pupils is highly impressive. For example, pupils benefit from time spent in the outdoor forest area, whittling branches, playing in the 'bat cave' and running through the wildflower meadow. They gain greatly from a well-thought-out enrichment programme that builds on the school's curriculum and broadens their horizons. For example, pupils visit museums, places of worship and even have their own 'Dovefest', which is organised by the parent and teacher association. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils participate fully in this wider offer.

Pupils, including those with SEND and those who face other barriers, rise to meet the high expectations that the school has for their learning and wellbeing. Pupils with SEND, disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils are supported effectively to succeed. Pupils work hard and are keen to learn. As a result, most pupils achieve well in many subjects. They are confident and articulate about their learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work on raising standards of attainment in mathematics for all pupils, so that these are as high as those in reading and writing.
 - Leaders should continue to make sure that staff in the early years consistently use effective interaction strategies so that all children, especially those who are disadvantaged, make the progress of which they are capable.
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About this inspection

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 (HMs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and several other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, during the inspection. Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and local authority.

Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher : Nik Smith

Lead inspector:

Sue Dymond, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Liz Dayton, His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Friend, His Majesty's Inspector

David Lobodzinski, His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Hazzard, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

838

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

840

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)

9.19%

Well below 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

2.03%

Below 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

19.57%

Above 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 maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	61%	Above
2024/25	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	71%	61%	Above
2022/23	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	82%	74%	Above
2024/25	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	88%	74%	Above
2022/23	82%	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	82%	72%	Above
2023/24	83%	72%	Above
2022/23	80%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	76%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	79%	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 maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	40%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	50%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	30%	46%	Below
2022/23	45%	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	68%	62%	Close to average
2024/25	63%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	74%	62%	Above
2022/23	64%	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	64%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	69%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	61%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	64%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	48%	60%	Below
2024/25	69%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	30%	59%	Below
2022/23	55%	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 maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	40%	68%	-28 pp
2024/25	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23	45%	66%	-21 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	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25	63%	81%	-18 pp
2023/24	74%	80%	-6 pp
2022/23	64%	78%	-15 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	64%	78%	-14 pp
2024/25	69%	78%	-10 pp
2023/24	61%	78%	-17 pp
2022/23	64%	77%	-14 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	48%	80%	-32 pp
2024/25	69%	81%	-12 pp
2023/24	30%	79%	-49 pp
2022/23	55%	79%	-25 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	3.3%	5.1%	Below
2023/24	3.7%	5.5%	Below
2022/23	4.2%	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 (1 term)	7.3%	14.3%	Below
2023/24	6.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23	7.9%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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