

St Stephen's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, A Voluntary Academy

Address: Gargrave Road, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 1PJ

Unique reference number (URN): 142023

Inspection report: 10 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.

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established a highly inclusive school culture. Staff know pupils and their families well. Positive relationships between families and school staff, combined with training, enable staff to quickly identify potential barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing. The school uses a range of interventions, both academic and pastoral, to support pupils to fully access school life. Particular consideration is given to pupils who speak English as an additional language. Some aspects of the curriculum have been tailored to take account of pupils' cultural backgrounds and heritage.

Staff receive training on how to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, pupils with SEND benefit from carefully considered support plans that help them to work towards goals in appropriate steps. Where necessary, the school commissions external agencies and specialists to further support pupils.

Leaders ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to provide further help where it is needed. Leaders understand the importance of using extra-curricular activities to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence. They encourage pupils who may face barriers to participate in clubs and events. This results in improved social and emotional wellbeing for some pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is well designed and sequenced and takes account of contextual issues and local risks. Staff make appropriate adjustments to the curriculum for pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils can recall some learning from their PSHE lessons. For example, they understand the importance of not sharing personal information online. The PSHE curriculum is supported by a comprehensive assembly programme. This reinforces important concepts and responds to pertinent issues in the community. Some assemblies help pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values and why these matter in modern Britain.

Pupils learn about a range of different faiths. They recognise the importance of respecting beliefs that differ from their own. This respect extends to other differences seen in society. Pupils are clear in their belief that everyone should be treated equally.

Leaders are committed to fostering a sense of belonging. They highlight the importance of this given the significant number of pupils who are new to the country or local area. They also aim to nurture pupils' sense of responsibility, care for others and contribution to the community. Their approach to this is well considered. Pupils take on meaningful leadership roles within school and participate in community and charitable events. Leaders have identified that some pupils have limited experiences beyond school, such as access to swimming lessons. Therefore, leaders have ensured that all pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 benefit from regular swimming lessons. The school offers a range of trips to broaden pupils' experiences and enrich learning. Outdoor adventurous activities support pupils to develop a

range of skills, such as teamwork. The school also offers a variety of clubs, some of which run at pupils' request.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. A consistently low proportion of pupils achieve the required standard in phonics at the end of Year 1. That said, pupils do quickly catch up with reading as they move through key stage 2. Many pupils leave Year 6 with the reading knowledge that they need for the next stage of education. However, published outcomes show that a number of pupils are not as well prepared for secondary school as they should be in writing and mathematics.

There is variability in how well pupils are supported to develop important writing and mathematical knowledge. Some incorrect letter formation and spelling persist over time and affect the fluency and legibility of writing. Some pupils have gaps in their number knowledge. This limits their ability to complete reasoning and problem-solving tasks successfully. Leaders are taking steps to improve this, but it is too early to see the impact of their actions.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils' attendance has been below the national average, and persistent absence has been high. This continues to be the case despite leaders' efforts to curtail term-time holidays and sporadic absences. Leaders monitor attendance regularly and prioritise forging relationships with families as a means of improving attendance. In some instances, this is having a positive impact, and attendance has improved. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils are frequently missing out on important learning and the wider opportunities provided in school.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times is calm and respectful. Leaders have created a culture of high expectations for behaviour, right from the early years. Staff implement the behaviour policy consistently. As a result, pupils understand what is expected of them. They are clear about rewards and consequences for behaviour. The approach to behaviour is underpinned by the school's values. Pupils understand the importance of treating everyone equally and with respect. As such, bullying and serious behaviour incidents are rare. Typically in lessons, pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is variability in how well the curriculum is implemented. Leaders recognise this and are taking steps to secure improvement. For example, leaders have introduced some schemes of learning to support teachers to deliver coherent sequences of lessons. Intended learning reflects the context of the school. Staff receive training on how to make effective adjustments to lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is

a clear focus on developing pupils' vocabulary. However, staff's expectations of pupils vary across subjects. Staff do not consistently check how well pupils are learning in lessons. A significant number of pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge and skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. Staff do not identify and address these gaps in a timely manner. This means that some basic errors and misconceptions persist over time, affecting pupils' success with tasks as well as their readiness for the next stage of education.

Historically, the teaching of phonics has been inconsistent. Pupils now benefit from consistent teaching that helps them to secure their phonics knowledge. In turn, this is helping them to become fluent readers.

Early years

Needs attention 

The curriculum in early years does not set all the knowledge children should learn and by when. This leads to staff sometimes being unclear about the small steps of learning children should take to support them to make progress towards end goals. While some adults model to children how they should complete activities, this practice is not consistent. This means that the intended learning for some activities does not happen.

Staff in the early years understand the importance of securing children's foundational knowledge and skills. In the Nursery Year, there is a focus on developing the prime areas of learning. Children in the Reception Year benefit from effective phonics teaching. During interactions, staff promote language development and extend children's thinking. Many children use an appropriate pencil grip, and staff remind them of how to sit so that they are ready to write. However, sometimes, adults do not intervene quickly enough when children make mistakes. This is particularly the case with letter and number formation. Some children in the Reception Year consistently form letters incorrectly, which will affect their ability to write fluently and legibly as they get older.

Staff create a warm, nurturing environment for children. Consequently, children are happy and settled. They behave well, cooperating with others and sharing resources.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Over time, the school has experienced some changes in staffing. This has slowed progress in some areas of the school's work since the last inspection. At times, those responsible for governance have not acted quickly enough to ensure that some improvements occur in a timely manner. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are working effectively with the trust to make improvements to the school. There is some evidence of the impact of their actions, particularly in relation to behaviour. However, some of their work needs further time to embed.

The local academy council largely understands its roles and responsibilities within the trust to hold leaders to account. It plays an active part in school life.

Staff receive a range of training that is contributing to some of the recent improvements in school. Staff feel well supported. They understand that the school is on a journey of improvement and are accepting of change. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to support their workload and wellbeing. Most staff have multiple roles and responsibilities. Leaders manage

this carefully. They have created an open and respectful school culture where staff feel valued.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They recognise and appreciate the improvements that leaders are making. They also recognise how the school engages well with the local community, participating in events at the local church. Parents describe the school as 'caring' and 'like a family'. They know that their children are well cared for.

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

Since the last inspection, some aspects of the school's work have declined. Leaders recognise this and are taking steps to secure improvement. In some areas, such as behaviour, their actions are making a noticeable difference. In others, it is too soon to determine whether actions are yet having the desired impact.

The school is a calm, nurturing environment in which to learn. Staff prioritise building positive relationships with families. They know this helps pupils to develop a sense of belonging. Pupils behave well because staff set clear and consistent expectations. Pupils show care and empathy for others, demonstrating the school's values in their interactions. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that adults would intervene quickly if it happened. Many pupils enjoy coming to school, but a significant minority do not attend regularly enough.

Pupils experience an uneven quality of education. Over time, they have not achieved consistently well. This includes children in the early years. New leaders are reshaping the curriculum. This is showing some early signs of positive impact, but there is still work to do to ensure that teaching is consistently effective across all subjects and year groups. Staff know how to identify potential barriers to learning or wellbeing. They receive training that helps them to make effective adjustments in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that they access learning alongside their peers.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities on offer to them that support their personal development. Older pupils relish opportunities to lead clubs or to support younger pupils at breaktimes. They act as positive role models and take their responsibilities seriously. The school interacts well with the local community, taking part in events and visiting local places of interest. Many pupils attend extra-curricular clubs, such as choir or board games club. These help them to develop their talents and interests.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff receive the training they need to teach the curriculum consistently well across all subjects so that more pupils achieve highly and are better prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders should ensure that staff swiftly identify and address gaps in pupils' foundational skills and knowledge, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that pupils can access more complex learning confidently.

- Leaders should further develop their approach to attendance so that pupils attend school more regularly and fewer pupils are persistently absent.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum in the early years sets out precisely what children should learn and when so that children are better prepared for the next stage of their education.
 - Leaders, including subject leaders and those responsible for governance, should strengthen the way in which they use information from monitoring activities to secure consistent improvement across the school.
 - Leaders should build on their positive work within personal development to ensure that pupils develop detailed knowledge of different faiths and the personal, social and health education curriculum.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic 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 (CEO), Darren Beardsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Mills.

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 senior leaders during the inspection. This included the headteacher, executive headteacher and CEO. Inspectors also spoke with the chair of the trust board, members of the local academy council and the director of education from the Diocese of Leeds.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The last section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in 2018.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to staff and governors.

Headteacher: Jo Sykes

Lead inspector:

Philippa Kermotschuk, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Zoe Helman, His Majesty's Inspector

Lee Swift, 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

153

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

218

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)

20.57%

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

3.92%

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

9.15%

Below 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	43%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	35%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	60%	Below

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	78%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	51%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	60%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	48%	71%	Below

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	64%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	55%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	73%	Below
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	13%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

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	69%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

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	13%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	58%	Below

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	31%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	59%	Below

‘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	13%	68%	-55 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 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	69%	80%	-11 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 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	13%	78%	-65 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	77%	-61 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	31%	80%	-48 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp

‘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)	6.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.0%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.0%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	19.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	22.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.9%	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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