

Waterloo Primary School

Address: Worthington Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, OL7 9NA

Unique reference number (URN): 144698

Inspection report: 28 April 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders know families well and take a proactive approach when attendance begins to fall. Where families face difficult circumstances, leaders offer practical, well-considered support. They make sure that even the most vulnerable pupils receive the help they need to attend. Leaders' work on reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent is having a clear impact. The most vulnerable groups of pupils attend school more regularly than their peers nationally.

Staff and pupils have warm and respectful relationships. Pupils behave well, settle quickly to their learning and move calmly around school. They typically demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Leaders recognise that pupils remain focused when tasks are well matched to their needs. Where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities need additional support to meet behavioural expectations, staff make thoughtful adjustments so that every pupil can be part of school life. Pupils say that staff act quickly when they raise concerns and that they feel safe and supported. Where bullying, or unkind behaviour, occurs, leaders deal with it promptly. Leaders take any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse, whether in school or online, seriously and address it effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since the previous inspection, leaders have refined the design and implementation of the curriculum. The structure of the curriculum takes account of the school's mixed-age classes. Leaders have mapped learning carefully at each stage so that pupils build on what they already know. They are working to make sure that staff teach new knowledge more consistently across the school.

Staff use their secure subject knowledge to check that pupils understand the most important content. When pupils fall behind, leaders make sure that they receive timely support to catch up. Leaders are developing the teaching of spelling and handwriting so that pupils write with greater confidence and fluency.

The approach to teaching reading and phonics is becoming more embedded. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the curriculum content through effective adaptations that staff make to tasks and activities. The school's challenging context, including high mobility, means that published outcomes have not yet caught up with the quality of the curriculum and teaching.

However, teachers do not consistently use what they know about pupils well enough to pitch work at the right level for every pupil. This means that higher-attaining pupils are not yet reaching the depth of understanding of which they are capable. Leaders have identified this as a priority and are taking steps to address it.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a welcoming and purposeful early years provision. They get to know children and their families before children start school, so that support is in place from the start. The curriculum builds knowledge carefully across all areas of learning, with a particular focus on communication and language. Adults model full sentences, ask thoughtful questions and encourage children to share and develop their ideas.

Children learn indoors and outdoors, with adults planning activities that match what each child needs. Children develop their thinking, creativity and independence through well-chosen tasks, such as making and racing tinfoil boats in the water tray, and drawing and construction.

Staff prioritise learning to read from the start and teach phonics purposefully. However, not all staff teach phonics in the same way, which means that some children do not receive the same quality of teaching in this area. Most children make appropriate progress.

Calm routines and a nurturing environment help children feel safe and ready to learn. Leaders quickly identify children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and make sure that they receive the support they need. Staff work closely with parents and carers to prepare children well for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with parents and carers to identify pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They provide effective and timely support to pupils who have any additional needs. Leaders focus the professional development programme on developing staff to respond appropriately to pupils' needs. For example, training on communication and language has strengthened support for the large proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Staff are building their expertise and typically provide what pupils need to help them learn.

Leaders consider the barriers disadvantaged pupils may face and provide targeted support. Their use of additional funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils access the full curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils typically make good progress from their starting points and achieve in line with expectations.

Leaders routinely check the impact of support. They listen to pupils' views and reflect on their experiences when considering what is working well. Looked-after children receive well-considered additional support that goes beyond what is required. Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils can access the same wider opportunities as their peers, including music tuition and residential experiences. Pupils and their families can access practical support and guidance through the school's on-site family liaison officer.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders across the school show genuine care for their community and a clear commitment to doing the best for their pupils. They have an accurate understanding of what the school

does well and where further improvement is needed. Leaders make careful, well-considered choices with the most vulnerable pupils in mind, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils sit at the centre of every decision.

School and trust leaders work effectively together. Governors and trustees know the school well. They ask leaders the right questions, check that the school is making progress and make sure that resources are used well. They invest in their own training so that they can offer effective support and challenge to leaders. This helps the school to build on its strengths and make lasting improvements. Reading and mathematics outcomes are improving, and writing in upper key stage 2 is getting better, reflecting the impact of leaders' careful and deliberate work.

Leaders build meaningful relationships with parents and carers. The headteacher greets families by name and is known personally across the wider community. Leaders celebrate the school's diversity and make sure the school's offer reflects the needs of everyone it serves.

Leaders make sure that teachers have the training they need to develop their skills and improve outcomes for pupils. Staff feel valued and supported. Leaders manage workload carefully and staff's wellbeing is a genuine priority. Leaders know that some aspects of teaching still need to improve further and are committed to making this happen.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a personal development programme that is inclusive, coherent and responsive to pupils' needs. Wider experiences and pastoral support complement pupils' learning across the curriculum and help prepare them well for later life.

Pupils learn about managing risk, including when online, and can explain what to do if they have concerns. They understand personal boundaries and strategies for resolving disagreements. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They understand the importance of maintaining their physical and mental wellbeing.

Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through a thoughtful programme of experiences. They reflect on their beliefs and values, develop their understanding of right and wrong and consider the consequences of their actions. Pupils talk confidently about different faiths and what makes people unique. Leaders promote fundamental British values consistently across the school. For example, pupils develop a secure understanding of the rule of law through taking part in a mock trial with local magistrates.

Pupils contribute positively to the school and wider community. They value leadership opportunities, including as school ambassadors and on the school council. Leaders find creative solutions to barriers such as the cost of activities, for example bringing a camping experience to the school field so that every pupil can take part. Leaders track participation carefully, making sure that disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care benefit fully.

Pastoral support is purposeful and well considered. Leaders and staff know pupils well and respond quickly when concerns arise. The school's approach to emotional wellbeing,

including a programme that gives pupils practical tools to manage their feelings, has a clear and meaningful impact. Pupils describe using these strategies independently in their daily lives. Leaders work closely with parents, carers and external agencies to make sure pupils receive the right support at the right time.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check is below average. Pupils' outcomes in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are also below the national average. Pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage of education as they should be. Some pupils have gaps in important knowledge across the curriculum. The school serves a highly disadvantaged community with high mobility and a rapidly rising number of pupils with additional needs.

Recent improvements to teaching and the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact. The Year 4 multiplication tables check is in line with the national average. Disadvantaged pupils perform at a standard similar to other disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress from their starting points. Leaders use their knowledge of individual pupils to plan support that reduces barriers to learning and progress, including for those with SEND.

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

Waterloo Primary School is a richly diverse and welcoming school. Pupils are proud of their school and feel a genuine sense of belonging, whatever their culture, religion or background. Pupils welcome those new to the school quickly, and staff make sure that they feel supported from the start. Most pupils leave well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff greet pupils each day with a genuine welcome. Pupils have trusting relationships with staff, who take the time to understand them as individuals and respond quickly to any worries or concerns. This creates a secure sense of safety across the school. The school dog, Jessie, is a well-loved part of school life and supports pupils' emotional wellbeing.

As soon as children start in the early years, they quickly learn to socialise and follow routines. Adults teach phonics and reading from the earliest stage. Most pupils enjoy their learning and maintain their focus in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need. They typically achieve in line with their peers. However, overall, too few pupils achieve as well as they could, particularly in writing, where gaps in knowledge are not closing quickly enough.

Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with any incidents effectively. Pupils attend school regularly, and disadvantaged pupils attend at rates that compare favourably with their peers nationally.

Pupils benefit from a broad range of enrichment opportunities. Leaders make sure that no pupil misses out. Older pupils take on meaningful leadership roles and develop confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Parents and carers value the school's inclusive ethos and community feel. They speak warmly of the relationships their children have with staff and the care shown towards their families.

Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that pupils build the important basic knowledge they need across the curriculum, so that more pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.
 - Leaders should make sure that teachers use their knowledge of pupils to pitch work at the right level, so that higher-attaining pupils reach greater depth in their learning.
 - Leaders should make sure that phonics is taught to the same high standard across the early years and key stage 1, so that pupils build secure foundations in reading.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Prestolee Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Michael Tonge, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Sargeant.

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 those responsible for governance, parents, pupils and staff.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery for 3-year-olds.

Headteacher: Damian Harris

Lead inspector:

Dianne Holcroft, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Graham Hamilton, Ofsted Inspector

Tom Johnson, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

344

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 272

School capacity

450

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)

53.58%

Well 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

2.33%

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

19.48%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	45%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	49%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	41%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	46%	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	59%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	57%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	73%	Below

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	60%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	66%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	61%	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 (final)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	66%	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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	40%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	32%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35%	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	53%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	60%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	48%	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	53%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	56%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	57%	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	36%	68%	-31 pp
2024/25 (final)	40%	69%	-30 pp
2023/24 (final)	32%	67%	-36 pp
2022/23 (final)	35%	66%	-32 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	53%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	60%	81%	-20 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	80%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	48%	78%	-30 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	53%	78%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	78%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	52%	77%	-25 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	56%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	81%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	79%	-20 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	57%	79%	-23 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)	5.1%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.4%	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 (3 term)	14.2%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.5%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	13.0%	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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