

Old Mill Primary School

Address: Station Road, LE9 6PT

Unique reference number (URN): 144837

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils generally achieve well. They achieve outcomes in line with or above national in the end of key stage assessments. This includes pupils in the early stages of their education. Pupils can recall their learning connected to the different subjects that they study.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and above their peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress through the curriculum from their starting points.

The school supports pupils in the early stages of learning to read well. Pupils quickly gain the knowledge and skills that they need to read accurately and fluently. Any pupil who is behind in reading gets the help that they need to catch up quickly. Some pupils have not secured the necessary skills in spelling and handwriting to ensure that they are prepared for their next steps in education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders consistently and effectively promote the importance of attending school well, to pupils, parents and carers. They have put in place clear systems to identify when any pupil's attendance is dropping and take swift and impactful action. Leaders and staff are supportive when working with pupils and parents. They have ensured that the school is an inviting and welcoming place that helps pupils to want to attend. Any barriers to pupils' attendance are well known by leaders and every effort is made to reduce those challenges. As a result, pupils at this school consistently attend at levels above the national average.

Pupils behave well. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are able to concentrate on their learning in calm and purposeful classroom environments. Most pupils take pride in their achievements. Leaders have established clear principles and strategies for the management of pupils' behaviour. Staff consistently apply these principles. The recognition and rewarding of pupils' achievements is central to the school's approach. Pupils' attitudes and actions contribute to the respectful and inclusive culture at the school. Pupils feel safe and appreciate the care and attention they receive from staff.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years benefit from a well-considered curriculum. Reading and the teaching of phonics is prioritised within the early years setting. Children are quickly helped to learn the sounds that they need to be able to read and blend to make words. Children talk positively about the stories that they read and the songs that they learn.

The curriculum in the early years supports children in developing their language and communication. Children receive opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking and reading aloud to their peers. Parents and carers are positive about the start to school that their children experience. Staff spend time getting to know children before they start school.

to ensure that they are aware of their starting points. Staff make suitable adaptations to support children if they have any particular needs. Children are encouraged to develop their awareness of being and staying healthy. Children understand the importance of brushing your teeth and eating a healthy diet.

Leaders recognise the importance of high-quality interactions with children in the early years, including when they are playing. However, staff do not deepen pupils learning and vocabulary when they are engaged in play-based activities as well as they could.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Inclusion is at the centre of the school's ethos. Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. They recognise and respond to any emerging or changing needs that pupils might have due to changes in circumstance. Leaders ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge to support pupils overcome their individual barriers to academic or personal success. Staff know which pupils require additional support. They ensure that pupils receive timely help so that pupils can access the curriculum and wider aspects of school life.

The school provides a wide range of external and internal support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes specialist support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders have identified that some aspects of the checks on learning, for a minority of pupils with SEND, are not as precise as they could be. This means that the impact of some of the interventions is not always clear.

The school knows the needs of its disadvantaged pupils well. Leaders use pupil premium funding to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This helps disadvantaged pupils to thrive. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the school's wide variety of enrichment activities, such as participation in trips and clubs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have high ambitions for all pupils, particularly those facing additional barriers. They have created an inclusive culture, where pupils feel safe and happy. They recognise the school's strengths and the priorities for further development. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum in response to pupils' needs, including a greater focus on learning important number facts. However, some of the checks on the curriculum do not always provide leaders with an accurate picture of their impact on some pupils' learning.

Staff feel valued by leaders. They appreciate how leaders are mindful of their workload and wellbeing. Staff benefit from a considered, high-quality professional learning programme. Those in the early stages of their teaching career get the guidance and support that they need to develop their classroom practice.

The trust supports and challenges the work of the school. Trustees meet their statutory responsibilities. They ensure leaders' decisions are always made in the best interests of pupils. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils and staff are provided with the necessary guidance that they need.

Leaders work with parents and carers, providing families with additional support when needed. Parents feel listened to and value being part of the school community.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

The school caters well for pupils' personal development. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils to understand themselves and the world around them. Pupils learn about how to stay safe, including online. They develop an understanding of healthy lifestyles. They benefit from support that helps them to look after their mental health. The school's relationships and sexual health education (RSHE) curriculum is appropriate. Pupils develop their understanding of respectful relationships. Teachers adapt learning effectively to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can access important knowledge within the PSHE and RSHE curriculums, whatever their starting points.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about and respect difference. Teachers in every subject help pupils to develop their understanding of cultures and peoples who may be different to themselves. Pupils gain an understanding of fundamental British values, including through a carefully designed programme of assemblies. This learning is reinforced by the range of educational visits that pupils take part in.

The school provides pupils with opportunities to develop their social skills. All pupils attend outdoor learning sessions. These help pupils to develop their communication and teamwork skills. House captains support their peers to take part in different aspects of school life. Wellbeing ambassadors provide emotional support for other pupils. Reading leaders help pupils build their confidence with their reading. This means pupils themselves play a role in helping to foster a sense of community. Leaders take an inclusive approach. Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are prioritised to ensure they have access to clubs, educational visits and leadership roles.

Pupils are well prepared for their lives beyond school. They recognise the importance of treating people with kindness and respect.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Some pupils do not secure the necessary foundations in knowledge and skills connected to spelling and handwriting. This means that they are not as well prepared for their next steps as they should be. The quality of feedback that pupils receive is inconsistent. As a result, some pupils' errors in basic knowledge and skills re-occur, particularly in relation to spelling, handwriting and sentence construction. Leaders' recently introduced strategies have a sharper focus on helping pupils master the basics in grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting. However, this is at too early a stage to impact on pupils' achievement.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is suitable and well designed for each subject and year group. The curriculum is ambitious. It sets out the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in a clear, progressive order. Staff have secure subject knowledge. They question pupils skilfully to check their understanding in lessons. Teaching models new concepts well, providing clear examples for pupils to follow. Important knowledge that pupils need to remember is routinely revisited. Teachers adapt the curriculum well to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, staff use images alongside written materials to help pupils understand key learning.

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

Pupils at Old Mill Primary School are proud of their caring school. They enjoy their lessons and feel part of a welcoming school community. Through the school motto of 'striving for excellence, going for gold', they build their understanding of what it means to be an effective learner and a good citizen. The school has an inclusive, nurturing ethos. Pupils are happy. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Friendly, attentive staff meet and greet pupils each day, making them feel safe and valued. Pupils benefit from staff's kindness and supportiveness.

The school's inclusive culture and practice ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are included in all aspects of school life. There are a range of exciting activities available to all pupils. These include a host of trips to enhance the curriculum and develop pupils' talents and interests. All pupils learn important skills through the school's outdoor learning provision. Leaders ensure that pupils facing any barriers to their learning receive the support that they need to be able to enjoy school life.

Most pupils achieve well in end of key stage 2 tests. However, some pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge and skills. This includes their skills connected to spelling and handwriting. This means that some pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be.

Pupils attend highly. They are welcoming and polite. Most pupils listen respectfully to staff and their classmates alike. Pupils understand the importance of treating everyone equally and fairly. Bullying is rare at the school and pupils know how to report it if they have concerns.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff are aware of the pupils who have not yet secured the necessary foundations in key areas, such as spelling and handwriting, and that gaps in foundational knowledge and skills are identified and closed quickly.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to identify and resolve pupils' misconceptions swiftly in order to avoid pupils making repeated mistakes.
 - Leaders should ensure that they accurately monitor the work being undertaken to further improve the school. This will ensure that they are clear on the impact of their work leading to consistently strong standards across all areas of the school's work.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Symphony Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tim Sutcliffe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nigel Harrison.

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 spoke with trust leaders, including the CEO. Inspectors also met with staff.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Alison Smith-Stewart: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Roxanne Fearn-Davies, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Shaun Carter, His Majesty's Inspector

Luella Dhoore, His Majesty's Inspector

Damienne Clarke, 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

367

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

390

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)

11.17%

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

0.82%

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

13.35%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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	71%	61%	Above
2024/25	73%	62%	Above
2023/24	68%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	72%	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	82%	75%	Above
2023/24	80%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	83%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	82%	72%	Above
2022/23	81%	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	83%	73%	Above
2024/25	91%	74%	Above
2023/24	78%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	81%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and 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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25	S	47%	S
2023/24	57%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	56%	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	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	57%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	75%	60%	Above

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	71%	59%	Above
2024/25	S	59%	S
2023/24	86%	58%	Above
2022/23	69%	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	68%	60%	Close to average
2024/25	S	61%	S
2023/24	57%	59%	Close to average
2022/23	69%	59%	Close to average

‘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 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	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25	S	69%	S
2023/24	57%	67%	-10 pp
2022/23	56%	66%	-10 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	S	81%	S
2023/24	57%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23	75%	78%	-3 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	71%	78%	-6 pp
2024/25	S	78%	S
2023/24	86%	78%	8 pp
2022/23	69%	77%	-9 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	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25	S	81%	S
2023/24	57%	79%	-22 pp
2022/23	69%	79%	-10 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 (1 term)	3.5%	5.1%	Below
2023/24	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23	4.0%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (1 term)	7.6%	14.3%	Below
2023/24	7.0%	14.6%	Below
2022/23	6.3%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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