

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Address: Saffron Drive, Allerton, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD15 7NE

Unique reference number (URN): 148478

Inspection report: 16 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Most pupils make positive progress through the curriculum from their starting points. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Pupils' attainment in national tests is generally in line with the national average.

Children make a positive start in the early years, where staff prioritise language, communication and motor skills. This helps them to build the foundations they need for later learning.

Leaders make regular checks on pupils' learning. This helps to identify any gaps in pupils' basic knowledge or skills. Pupils generally receive precise, targeted support to close these gaps.

Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. The school's focus on raising expectations and standards is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Consequently, pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a curriculum with high ambition for all pupils. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. The curriculum is underpinned by a clear expectation that pupils will keep up rather than catch up. The explicit teaching of vocabulary supports pupils to develop reading fluency and comprehension. Pupils are articulate and confidently explain their learning, showing secure subject knowledge. Teachers use clear explanations, high-quality questioning and well-established routines to support pupils' learning.

In the early years and key stage 1, clear routines, effective adult interactions and the use of concrete apparatus support pupils to engage positively in learning. Staff are tenacious in their approach to the teaching of basic skills and knowledge. This is highly effective with the younger children, with high expectations for pencil grip, letter formation and handwriting. While this approach has also been introduced in key stage 2, some pupils still require support to ensure that their basic skills are secure.

Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad range of subjects. They carefully tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs. This helps pupils to build their knowledge over time.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years settle quickly into well-established routines. Positive relationships create a nurturing environment where children feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Behaviour is positive.

Leaders design the curriculum using their knowledge of the children. This helps to ensure that all children get off to a flying start. The curriculum is well sequenced and has a clear focus on securing basic knowledge and skills. Staff prioritise the teaching of phonics. They have high expectations for early writing, including pencil grip and letter formation.

The early years is welcoming for all children. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive precise support that ensures that they keep up with their learning. Staff carefully plan small-group activities in phonics, handwriting and mathematics to help all children make positive progress from their starting points. All welfare and wellbeing requirements are met.

The recently developed environment provides a range of purposeful opportunities for exploration, communication and physical development. Children demonstrate high levels of independence. Adults use questioning and modelling effectively to extend learning and develop vocabulary. While some adults promote learning through high-quality interactions and language-rich experiences, this practice is not securely embedded. Adults encourage children to explain their thinking and provide appropriate resources to help them succeed.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They establish a positive culture where everyone is welcome. This means that pupils with SEND access the same intended learning as their peers through well-considered adaptations to lessons. Pupils receive support from skilled adults.

Leaders understand pupils' barriers to learning. They are proactive in responding to pupils' needs. They work closely with families and professionals to ensure that pupils get the right support at the right time. Parents, carers, pupils and staff contribute to regular reviews of pupils' progress towards their individual targets.

Leadership of inclusion is effective. Staff receive appropriate training to help them to identify needs early and implement appropriate adaptations, such as visual timetables, workstations and manipulatives. These strategies help pupils with SEND access the curriculum and demonstrate their learning successfully. Pupils with SEND and other barriers to their learning make positive progress through the curriculum from their starting points. Leaders engage well with external agencies to support pupils, including those who are looked after. Pupils are well supported to thrive and have their voices heard. Leaders use additional funding appropriately to support pupils who are disadvantaged. This means that they have full access to every opportunity available to them.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for the school and are role models of professionalism. They prioritise supporting all pupils to do well and place the best interests of pupils at the forefront of decision-making. They work hard to engage with families and the wider community. This includes when addressing attendance or when supporting pupils' wellbeing. Consequently, most parents value the school.

Leaders work closely with the trust and local academy council to provide a clear strategic direction and maintain a focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They make regular checks on different aspects of the school's work and use this to inform improvement planning. They work with external agencies to check on the accuracy of their judgements.

Trust leaders and governors are knowledgeable about the school and bring a range of expertise to their roles. They provide appropriate support and challenge, holding leaders to account for the quality of education, pupil outcomes and the effective use of resources. Governance arrangements ensure that statutory responsibilities are met and that safeguarding remains a high priority. Leaders promote a welcoming culture in which pupils are valued and supported to succeed. Trust leaders maintain oversight of the school's performance.

Staff receive appropriate training to support them to teach a broad and balanced curriculum. This training is in line with school development priorities. It is sometimes tailored for individuals. Generally, staff feel supported in their work and feel that their workload is manageable.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a well-considered programme for pupils' personal development. This meets effectively the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, and prepares them for life in modern Britain. Pupils have an understanding of the fundamental British values and the characteristics that mean some people are protected by law. They have a real-life concept of democracy through the school council, where pupils vote for their class representatives.

Pupils develop respect for others and understand different forms of discrimination. They learn about different world faiths and cultures. The school uses its diverse community to celebrate and share the different cultures within school. For example, the school holds a culture day where pupils wear their cultural dress, and parents and carers contribute traditional food. Pupils and their families enjoy sharing their traditions with one another.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is comprehensive and builds pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders tailor it to the needs of the pupils and the community they live in. For example, additional road safety and bicycle safety training help pupils to be safe in the local area. Pupils develop an awareness of how to keep safe both online and offline and understand where to seek help. Leaders use external agencies, such as the police, child protection charities and fire safety officers to support in the delivery of the curriculum. Pupils learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way.

There are leadership opportunities for pupils, such as wellbeing ambassadors. These develop pupils' confidence and enhance their contribution to school life. Pupils talk with pride about these roles. There is a range of extra-curricular clubs and educational visits that are available to all pupils. The pastoral offer supports pupils' emotional needs effectively.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Pupils' attendance, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, is below the national average. Leaders know this and prioritise improving attendance across the school. Leaders have recently adopted the trust-wide approach to improving attendance. This is helping leaders to better identify pupils who find it difficult to attend school regularly. Although there have been periods of improvement, attendance over time remains too low. Persistent absence is high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, many pupils do not benefit fully from the school's curriculum and wider provision.

Behaviour across the school is generally positive. Pupils move around the school calmly and purposefully and most engage well in lessons. Positive relationships between adults and pupils support learning effectively. Pupils typically work collaboratively and show respect for one another. Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare, but pupils know that trusted adults will sort it out should it occur. During unstructured times, pupils play well together, including with their peers from different classes. A buddy system between children in the Reception Year and pupils in Year 6 supports emotional regulation and fosters a sense of responsibility and care.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to St Matthew's. They feel proud to belong to this friendly and welcoming school. Pupils feel safe and know that there are many trusted adults they can speak with if they need to. Bullying is unusual, but pupils know that if it were to happen, adults would sort it out. Pupils are positive and respectful of each other and staff. They know the school motto of 'be the best that I can be' and strive to demonstrate this in their actions around school. Leaders and staff support pupils well to realise this motto, both academically and in their personal development. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged.

Pupils enjoy their learning. Leaders have recently developed the curriculum, ensuring that it is well sequenced and relevant to the pupils' needs, interests and context. For example, pupils learn about the history of Bradford and how it has changed in recent years. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their learning and can recall knowledge from previous units of work. Classrooms are calm, purposeful environments, and pupils typically engage well with their learning. Pupils, including those with SEND or who are disadvantaged, make positive progress through the curriculum from their starting points. The attendance for some pupils, however, is not high enough. This means that some pupils are missing out on important education.

The school includes all pupils in its wider, extra-curricular offer. This involves activities to enrich pupils' learning and provide experiences that they may not otherwise have. The school offers a variety of clubs and educational visits. Pupils particularly enjoy the

leadership opportunities that are available to them. These help them to develop their confidence and make a difference to their school community.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to improve pupils' attendance, including for the most disadvantaged pupils.
 - Leaders should ensure that there is sufficient focus on handwriting, letter formation and pencil grip so that all pupils build fluency and accuracy in their writing.
 - Leaders should ensure that children in the early years consistently benefit from high-quality interactions with adults so that they make secure progress through the curriculum and achieve their potential.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Blessed Christopher Wharton 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), Chris Hanson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Martin.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection, including from the trust. They also met with the CEO, trust board members and members of the local governing board. Inspectors spoke with some pupils, staff and parents and carers.

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Leeds. Its last section 48 inspection was 19 and 20 November 2025.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The school joined the Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Academy Trust in May 2023. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed.

Headteacher: Paul Whitehead

Lead inspector:

Lorraine Bamforth, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lynda Florence, Ofsted Inspector

Bev Blanchfield, 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 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

224

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

240

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)

29.67%

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

2.68%

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

13.84%

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 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		61%	
2024/25 (final)	65%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	58%	61%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (final)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	74%	Above
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23		71%	

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		73%	
2024/25 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	45%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	
2024/25 (final)	64%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	62%	Above
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	64%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	58%	Above
2022/23		58%	

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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	55%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average
2022/23		59%	

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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	45%	69%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	64%	81%	-17 pp
2023/24 (final)	88%	80%	8 pp
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	64%	78%	-15 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	55%	81%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	79%	-17 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		79%	

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)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.7%	5.5%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	16.4%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.7%	14.6%	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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