

St Giles' CofE Primary School

Address: Blanche Lane, EN6 3PE

Unique reference number (URN): 117564

Inspection report: 13 January 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.

Strong standard ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a comprehensive and highly inclusive provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This includes a well-planned curriculum for personal, social, health education (PSHE). Other curriculum areas, such as science, computing and religious education supplement the PSHE curriculum and strengthen the school's offer. Pupils recall their learning impressively well across all areas of PSHE. They acquire important knowledge around the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law and tolerance. Pupils have a depth of understanding around cultural and religious differences, personal safety and healthy relationships. They are able to discuss topical issues, such as discrimination in an informed and insightful way. Carefully planned visits, for example, to the houses of Parliament and visits from external speakers, such as the police, enhance pupils' learning and bring it to life.

Numerous wider opportunities shape pupils' character and enable them to develop their skills and talents. Older pupils take on leadership roles that grow their confidence, resilience and sense of responsibility. Voting systems to fill these roles give all pupils a taste of democracy in action.

Leaders ensure that the personal development offer benefits all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders track pupils' participation in the wider offer meticulously. They identify pupils who do not participate as fully and put swift measures in place to address this. They include pro-actively setting up activities that engage pupils' particular interests.

The school provides excellent pastoral support for pupils. Leaders and staff use their extensive knowledge of pupils and their families to anticipate any pastoral needs they may have. Everything in the school's wider offer is deliberately planned in a highly coherent and strategic way.

Expected standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Leaders recognise the links between weaker achievement and poor attendance. They promote the importance of regular attendance widely. Leaders analyse attendance information carefully so that they can act swiftly when they have concerns. They build strong relationships with parents and carers. These enable them to take a bespoke approach where pupils' attendance is lower than it should be. Some pupils are absent for prolonged periods of time due to individual circumstances. Where this is the case, leaders work closely with external partners. This has helped to secure some improvements over time from often low starting points. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and is close to national averages.

The school's values of respect, kindness, honesty, courage and perseverance are key drivers of positive behaviour and attitudes throughout the school. Pupils know the values and try hard to demonstrate them. They are motivated by rewards, such as house points, certificates and hot chocolate with the headteacher. Staff are consistent in their high expectations and their application of the school's behaviour code. Pupils who need extra help to manage their feelings and meet the behaviour expectations receive this. As a result, classrooms are calm and conducive to learning. Pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. Relationships are warm and caring. Instances of bullying, unkindness or any form of discriminatory behaviour are extremely rare.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum has been redesigned in recent years. The result is an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that enables pupils to build knowledge and skills solidly in each subject. This includes developing their vocabulary. Leaders have planned the curriculum carefully to cater for the school's mixed-age classes. They ensure that pupils learn the right content, knowledge and skills for their age group. Leaders use their checks to identify aspects of the curriculum that need to be refined further. Historic weaknesses in the curriculum mean that a number of older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. In response, leaders have ensured that there is a sharp focus in the curriculum on basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers identify and address gaps in these areas in a timely and precise manner.

Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. This has been developed through the support provided by leaders. Typically, teachers explain clearly, help pupils to understand content and design tasks that enable pupils to practise new learning. Teachers make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the curriculum successfully. Occasionally, some teachers do not make full use of opportunities in the lesson to identify and address misconceptions. Overall, leaders check that pupils are learning effectively.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years foundation stage curriculum is suitably ambitious. It is carefully designed to meet children's needs and is effectively taught. There is a sharp focus on language development and basic skills in English and mathematics. Staff engage positively with parents and carers, so they can support their children's learning. As a result, children are generally well prepared for Year 1 by the time they leave Reception.

Stories are central to the curriculum, and children acquire a love of reading from early on. They retell stories, attempt early writing and take part in play-based activities inspired by familiar stories. Children learn the letters and sounds they need for fluent reading in daily phonics sessions. Staff are adept at identifying children who need additional phonics support. They provide incidental reading and writing opportunities throughout the day to reinforce children's learning and ensure that no one falls behind.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well. Staff plan targeted teaching and design activities sensitively to meet individual

children's needs. They model language effectively and give children opportunities to practise it in context. For example, in the 'Coffee shop' role-play area, children learn how to greet customers and take their orders.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed robust systems for identifying pupils' needs and any barriers to learning they face. They ensure that all staff know pupils' needs well and carefully plan the support that will help pupils overcome these barriers. For example, for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), leaders call upon advice and support from external specialists to design pupils' provision. Staff receive appropriate support and training so that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to help individual pupils. For example, staff work alongside a speech and language therapist. This helps them to put in place strategies that support pupils' language development.

Leaders and staff draw up achievable and measurable targets for pupils with SEND. They check the provision pupils receive to ensure that it works well. They make adjustments if necessary. For example, leaders check the progress of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional funding. They ensure that the funding is spent wisely on strategies that have the greatest impact on pupils' experiences at school and their progress through the curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including governors, share an ambitious vision for high-quality education for all pupils. This includes a comprehensive approach to inclusion so that pupils from all vulnerable or disadvantaged groups are able to succeed. Leaders communicate this vision effectively. The school has experienced an unsettling period of change since the last inspection. This includes high turnover among staff, governors and leaders. Leaders have supported the school community well through challenging times. For example, they have restored trusting relationships with parents and carers, who have an extremely positive view of the school.

Governors carry out their roles effectively and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They have refined their systems for overseeing and evaluating the school's work. This strengthens governors' ability to support and challenge leaders in the best interests of pupils.

Leaders are clear-sighted about the school's strengths and areas to develop. They make astute decisions and have acted quickly to address important areas for improvement. This includes providing staff with high-quality training so that they are well equipped to carry out their roles. Leaders are deeply reflective. They engage well with professional partners, such as local authority and diocesan advisers, in their pursuit of continuous improvement.

Staff appreciate leaders' support for their wellbeing and workload. They feel valued and are unanimously committed to the future success of the school and its pupils.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

The school's published outcomes in national tests in phonics and mathematics have been below national averages for three years. Too few pupils achieve at a higher level. The work in pupils' books shows older pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge, particularly in aspects of English, such as handwriting. This includes some disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have taken action to address the weaknesses in pupils' achievement. Current pupils progress well through the curriculum. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points. Pupils' confidence and understanding in mathematics is growing as a result of leaders' actions. Pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge receive appropriate support to develop reading fluency. There is an improving trend in pupils' achievement in national tests. In 2025, Year 6 pupils' outcomes in reading and writing were close to national averages. However, more time is needed for the impact of leaders' actions to be fully seen.

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

There is a happy, family-like atmosphere at this friendly village school. From the moment children join in Reception, they build positive relationships with staff. Many pupils join the school at different times. They and their families are warmly welcomed and helped to settle in quickly.

Attendance at the school is improving. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging. The school's house system encourages teamwork and collaboration. House captains lead their teams ably, developing responsibility and confidence. Pupils socialise happily across age groups in the playground and dining room.

In Reception, children learn routines that enable them to behave well, whether they are learning or playing. These routines continue to support pupils' positive conduct throughout the school. Staff are positive role models for the behaviours and attitudes they want pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils regularly demonstrate the school's values of respect, kindness, courage, honesty and perseverance.

All pupils are included in the school's rich, wider offer to prepare them for their future lives. They participate in competitive sports and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as chess club and book club. Trips take pupils beyond their immediate environment and introduce them to new experiences.

The school's small size means all staff get to know pupils and their families well. They know which pupils need additional support, for example pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff ensure that pupils receive the help they need to overcome any barriers to learning.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant turbulence in leadership and staffing. Over several years, a number of pupils have left the school without the important knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. This limits how well prepared they are for the next stage of their education. Pupils currently at the school are benefiting from the actions taken by leaders. These include changes to the curriculum. This is beginning to have positive impact on what they know and remember.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that the gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge close rapidly, in order to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in phonics and mathematics.
 - Leaders should ensure the consistent use of formative assessment to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
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About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors are Elaine Hartland and Mary Butcher.

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 HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the school business manager during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke with the school effectiveness adviser and with a representative from the Diocese of St Albans on the telephone.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection took place in December 2021.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

The school has undergone significant changes in staffing, governance and leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher was the fifth interim headteacher in that period. He was appointed substantively in April 2023.

Headteacher: Mark Pipe

Lead inspector:

Caroline Crozier, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Susan Sutton, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

84

Well 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

105

Well below 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)

30.95%

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

2.38%

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

17.86%

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

Close to 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	33%	61%	Below
2024/25	40%	62%	Below
2023/24	38%	61%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	17%	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	58%	74%	Below
2024/25	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	54%	74%	Below
2022/23	42%	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	50%	72%	Below
2024/25	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	54%	72%	Below
2022/23	25%	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	38%	73%	Below
2024/25	40%	74%	Below
2023/24	46%	73%	Below
2022/23	25%	73%	Below

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	6%	46%	Below
2024/25	S	47%	S
2023/24	17%	46%	Below
2022/23	0%	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	39%	62%	Below
2024/25	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	50%	62%	Below
2022/23	43%	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	22%	59%	Below
2024/25	S	59%	S
2023/24	33%	58%	Below
2022/23	14%	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	17%	60%	Below
2024/25	S	61%	S
2023/24	33%	59%	Below
2022/23	14%	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	6%	68%	-62 pp
2024/25	S	69%	S
2023/24	17%	67%	-51 pp
2022/23	0%	66%	-66 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	39%	80%	-41 pp
2024/25	S	81%	S
2023/24	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23	43%	78%	-35 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	22%	78%	-56 pp
2024/25	S	78%	S
2023/24	33%	78%	-44 pp
2022/23	14%	77%	-63 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	17%	80%	-63 pp
2024/25	S	81%	S
2023/24	33%	79%	-46 pp
2022/23	14%	79%	-65 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 terms)	8.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24	9.1%	5.5%	Above
2022/23	7.4%	5.9%	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 (2 terms)	23.0%	13.3%	Above
2023/24	30.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23	29.2%	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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