

Bodsham Church of England Primary School

Address: School Hill, Bodsham, Ashford, Kent, TN25 5JQ

Unique reference number (URN): 118673

Inspection report: 19 May 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 ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children in the Reception Year get off to a successful start at the school. They benefit from effective teaching and a well-considered curriculum that supports the development of important skills. High-quality interactions enable staff to challenge children and address misconceptions promptly. Phonics is taught well, and children use their phonics skills to help develop their writing and spelling. Children have a secure grasp of number and concentrate well in mathematical activities.

The environment is nurturing and promotes independence, creativity and positive relationships. Children are engaged and manage their learning choices well, for example when creating their own books linked to familiar stories. They respond with curiosity and enthusiasm to new experiences, such as when gathering round to carefully observe a tiny caterpillar that is brought into their classroom.

Children quickly learn routines and behave very well. Leaders have a secure understanding of children's learning and monitor this closely, adapting provision where needed. Language development is prioritised and, as a result, children develop a rich vocabulary and explain their thinking with confidence. The outdoor area provides a wealth of activities and opportunities for children to develop their creativity and imaginative play, as well as their physical development. Effective partnerships with parents and carers support children, including those who are disadvantaged, to make excellent progress in the early years.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's personal development and wellbeing programme is established, extensive and delivered through many aspects of the curriculum. Leaders maintain close oversight of this aspect of the school's work to ensure consistency in teaching, learning and expectations. The programme reflects the school's context and ensures that disadvantaged pupils are fully included and given equal opportunities. As a result, it has a positive and significant impact on pupils' personal development, skills and knowledge.

Pupils develop secure social skills. They are confident and articulate. They engage in thoughtful discussions, sharing their views and listening carefully to others. They show maturity in their understanding and discussions about different beliefs and abilities. Pupils benefit from an impressive range of creative experiences, including art, music and wider cultural opportunities, which contribute positively to their development. For example, older pupils recently took part in a music and poetry workshop as part of the Canterbury Festival.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They know how their bodies work and understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. Their awareness of keeping safe, both online and in and out of school, is enhanced through opportunities such as safety week. Pupils learn about a wide and appropriately challenging range of topics that prepare them well for life in modern Britain, including racism and mental health. They speak confidently about forming positive relationships, as well as how to resolve conflict and respond to bullying. They are supported to consider their future goals and aspirations.

At this school, pupils develop as confident individuals who demonstrate kindness, compassion and empathy. They take pride in projects that they have worked on. For example, reception-age children explain that when they planted flowers in their garden area, this helped the bee population to pollinate more flowers. In key stage 2, pupils recall how they dressed up as superheroes to raise money for a homeless charity. Pupils respect others, understand right from wrong and act as positive role models. This is particularly evident in how well older pupils support their younger peers.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

This school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Pupils benefit from the school's clear emphasis on core skills in the curriculum. By the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve well in national tests, with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics significantly above average over time. Outcomes in reading are especially high at both the expected and higher standards. Pupils learn to read fluently and develop independence, applying their knowledge effectively to unfamiliar words.

Pupils also achieve well across the school's wider curriculum. They develop knowledge and skills across a range of subjects and make secure progress from their starting points, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the quality of pupils' work, including handwriting in older year groups, is variable. In some subjects, pupils do not consistently produce detailed or well-presented work.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a coherent and carefully sequenced curriculum that sets out clearly the knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils are expected to learn. Staff value this clarity, particularly in supporting progression across mixed-age classes. There is a clear emphasis on core skills, especially reading, which underpins learning across the wider curriculum.

Teachers typically demonstrate secure subject knowledge and use questioning effectively to check and deepen pupils' understanding. Explanations are clear and draw attention to key information so that pupils can apply this in their own work. Tasks are purposeful and support pupils to build on prior learning and apply this in new contexts. For example, in key stage 1, pupils learn about parts of a plant before examining different leaves found in the school grounds.

Teaching and support are well matched to pupils' needs. Thoughtful interactions, effective use of prior learning and appropriate adaptations enable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to access the curriculum alongside their peers. Leaders identify aspects of provision to refine and act on these. As a result, pupils benefit from improved experiences across the curriculum. For example, the school's recent focus on art and design has broadened opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills and learn about artists from different cultures.

There is a clear, well-established and inclusive culture across the school. Leaders identify and assess pupils' needs effectively as they arise, or on entry for those who join the school. This is particularly important given the relatively high number of pupils who join at different points in their education. Pupils are known well here. This enables leaders and staff to understand pupils' individual barriers to learning or wellbeing, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and staff work collaboratively to plan appropriate support, adaptations and strategies. This takes place at both an individual level and through what is in place more widely across the class and school.

Disadvantaged pupils and those known, or previously known, to social care are also monitored closely, with leaders drawing on regular discussions to identify emerging barriers and respond to these. Engagement with parents and carers, alongside external agencies, supports a joined-up approach to meeting pupils' needs. The pupil premium strategy contributes positively to pupils' experiences and access to support. Reviews of pupils' progress are typically regular. However, formal recording is not always consistent, which limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of provision with precision over time.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leadership of attendance is not currently effective. Leaders understand individual pupils' contexts and the barriers affecting attendance. They have worked with families and put in place supportive strategies where needed. However, these actions are not supported by systematic monitoring or robust oversight. The lack of monitoring limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of their work or respond swiftly to patterns of absence. This weakness is linked to constrained leadership capacity at the current time. Previously, when leaders were able to focus more strategically on attendance, this work was more effective. For instance, in the last academic year, attendance improved and reached levels in line with the national average for the first time in several years.

Harmonious and fair relationships underpin the consistently positive behaviour seen at the school. Leaders' high expectations for behaviour are well known by pupils, who clearly demonstrate these in their interactions and conduct. Pupils are friendly and listen to one another respectfully. Incidents of bullying and other serious behaviours are rare. When they do occur, leaders respond appropriately, helping to reinforce positive behaviour over time. At times, some pupils require a more individualised approach. In these cases, staff and leaders work together to review behaviour strategies and make suitable adjustments so that pupils are well supported.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Governors' monitoring does not enable them to have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including safer recruitment, or to

ensure that identified actions are followed through consistently. Governors have established appropriate systems to understand the context of each school within the federation. They maintain a strategic role and understand their statutory responsibilities.

Leaders do not always have a precise view of the impact of their work. This is evident in areas such as attendance, where monitoring lacks sufficient rigour. These weaknesses are linked to reduced leadership capacity during a period of significant change. In recent years, leaders and governors have made difficult decisions to secure the school's long-term sustainability, informed by a clear understanding of the school's context. They have managed these changes thoughtfully, reflected in very positive engagement from staff, parents and carers.

Professional learning is closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities, with a clear focus on inclusion and developing teachers' subject knowledge. The school is strengthening links with other small schools to enhance collaboration and share effective practice. Staff feel valued and well supported here. They recognise the steps leaders take to manage workload within a small team where many responsibilities are shared.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work and its nurturing ethos. They frequently comment that their children are known as individuals and supported well.

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

Pupils develop a deep sense of belonging at Bodsham Church of England Primary School. They appreciate their school's small size, which they say helps them to quickly form friendships across year groups and feel very well known by staff. Pupils of all ages play happily together beneath the distinctive horse chestnut tree in the playground, which they know forms the emblem on their school uniform. Pupils are kind and inclusive towards those who join the school at different times. New pupils settle quickly and feel welcomed. Pupils also value the recognition they receive, for example through the school's 'gold book' and class rewards, which celebrate their achievements.

Pupils enjoy learning and are confident to ask for help. They are keen to develop their knowledge and engage well in lessons. A wide programme of enrichment means that learning often takes place beyond the classroom, from children in the Reception Year exploring their wooded area, to older pupils taking part in sporting events with other schools. Relationships are respectful here. Pupils know it is important to listen carefully to others' views, even when they disagree. Attendance has improved and is now in line with national averages.

Pupils speak very positively about their experiences at this school. They know and understand the school values of creativity, love and strength, and explain how they demonstrate these in their day-to-day actions. Pupils feel valued and are confident that their views are listened to and taken into account. Opportunities to take on responsibility, such as serving as school councillors, enable pupils to contribute meaningfully to school life and decision-making. They are also pleased to play a part in the wider community, for example

through events such as the annual 'daffodil tea', where they perform for local residents, many of whom attended the school as children, and taking part in local church services.

Next steps

- Governors should strengthen their oversight of safeguarding by monitoring systematically and using effective challenge so they have a secure and accurate understanding of the impact of leaders' work.
 - Leaders should establish a more rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring the impact of their work, including in attendance and inclusion, ensuring that analysis is regular, precise and focused on evaluating actions, progress and impact over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff embed consistently high expectations for handwriting, so that pupils routinely produce high-quality work across the curriculum.
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About this inspection

The acting headteacher took up their post in January 2026.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Liz Chapman.

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 staff. They also spoke with the school's improvement partner from the local authority and a representative from the diocese. The lead inspector met with members of the governing board, including the chair.

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 was carried out in March 2026.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Acting Headteacher: Mary Stephen

Lead inspector:

Katie Hancock, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Margaret Coussins, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

75

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

103

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)

10.67%

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

0.00%

Well 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

9.33%

Below 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 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	78%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	92%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	81%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	71%	Close to average

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	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	92%	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 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)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
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)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
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)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
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)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

‘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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
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)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
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)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23		79%	

‘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 (3 term)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.9%	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 (3 term)	12.2%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	29.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.5%	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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