

Burnley St Stephen's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address: Woodgrove Road, Burnley, Lancashire, BB11 3EJ

Unique reference number (URN): 119486

Inspection report: 14 April 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

There is variation in how well pupils at the school achieve in English, mathematics and in other subjects. This is reflected in the school's published results, such as the tests that Year 6 pupils sit in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' recall of learning is stronger in some subjects than others. Pupils are not prepared consistently well for their next stages of education as a result. The progress that some pupils make is not as rapid as it needs to be. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

Some pupils do not develop the fluency in reading, writing and mathematics that they need to access the rest of the curriculum successfully. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is low when compared to other schools. This is also true for the results of the Year 4 multiplication tables check.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Pupils' attendance varies. Attendance rates overall are in line with national averages. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who are persistently absent are high when compared to other pupils nationally. Leaders' systems for supporting these pupils are not as effective as they could be.

Leaders do not ensure that pupils maintain high standards of behaviour and attitudes throughout the school day. Pupils' behaviour, focus and attention during lessons are particularly variable. Staff do not adhere to the school's behaviour policy with consistency. This causes confusion, especially for pupils with SEND.

Leaders do not routinely analyse behaviour incidents, including those that result in suspensions. This means that at times, pupils do not receive the support that they need to improve their behaviour. Rates of suspensions are particularly high for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND. The school's use of repeated suspensions is not effective in improving some pupils' behaviour. They fall further behind their peers and are less able to access the curriculum. This often results in frustration and further incidents of misbehaviour.

Leaders take incidents of discrimination and bullying seriously. They ensure that pupils receive the support that they need when this occurs.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The impact of the curriculum on pupils is variable. Pupils are not prepared consistently well for their next stages of education. In most cases this is because teachers do not build on what pupils already know well enough. They do not routinely identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on to new learning. For example, some pupils who struggle with reading do not receive the support that they need. At times, teachers do not correct misconceptions. This includes when pupils incorrectly form letters or numbers. Some pupils

with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils struggle to make sense of their learning. Teachers do not receive all the support that they need from leaders to meet the differing needs of these pupils.

Leaders' understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum is incomplete. They are aware that pupils are not learning the curriculum well enough in mathematics and English. Leaders are taking action to improve the school's phonics programme. However, they do not have sufficiently robust systems in place to find out which other aspects of the curriculum are not working well enough or the reasons why. This limits their ability to bring about needed improvement.

Early years

Needs attention 

Children are not as well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1 and beyond as they should be. They begin to learn about how phonics can be used to read words. However, some children do not make the progress in this that they should. This is also true of writing. Many children do not master correct letter formation before leaving the early years. Their writing is not as well developed as it needs to be to produce clear and legible handwriting as they progress through the school.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years curriculum. This curriculum effectively supports children to build up their knowledge in most areas of learning during their time within the provision. Leaders ensure that staff understand and meet the differing needs of children.

Staff make sure that children quickly become familiar with the routines of the Reception Year. Children settle well. They are well cared for and build positive relationships with staff. Leaders liaise effectively with parents and carers. Parents become increasingly confident in supporting their children in their learning. For example, staff keep parents well-informed about their children's phonics learning and how they can support this at home.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders recognise the barriers to learning that some pupils face due to additional challenges in their lives. However, some of the support that they provide is not as effective as it could be. Leaders' oversight of the impact of the support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is uneven.

Leaders do not ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND achieve as well as they could. Leaders do not identify pupils' individual learning needs consistently well. Teachers are sometimes unclear how to provide the support that these pupils need. Some pupils struggle to access aspects of their learning at times. Their behaviour and attendance deteriorate as a result.

Some of the most vulnerable pupils at the school are out of class for extended periods of time. This often includes pupils with SEND. When this happens, they miss large chunks of learning, including in English and mathematics. Consequently, these pupils fall further behind their peers.

Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support that they need to access trips, clubs and other activities. They make sure that most pupils successfully regain their composure when they feel overwhelmed.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The checks that leaders carry out to find out how well pupils are thriving and achieving lack rigour at times. This limits their ability to identify and address root causes of why pupils are not achieving, behaving or attending as well as they might. Leaders' actions sometimes lack precision. They do not focus sharply enough on making sure that they provide the right support for pupils who most need it.

There has been considerable turbulence in leadership in recent months. This is due to a number of unavoidable changes to staffing occurring during the academic year. Some leaders are new to their role. They are still familiarising themselves with what is working well at the school and what is not. They keep pupils' best interests at the heart of their decision-making. Leaders have secured external support to help them to bring about the needed improvements at the school. Governors have provided reassurance and regular communication to staff, parents and carers during this time. This has helped the transition of a newly formed leadership team. Staff are up-beat and feel well supported.

Governors strive to uphold their statutory duties with diligence. However, they are not as well informed as they could be about some aspects of the school's work. This impacts on their ability to hold leaders to account effectively. For example, they are not well informed about how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported. They are unaware how much of their educational entitlement that some of these pupils miss.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

The design of the personal development programme lacks rigour and precision. Leaders do not consider well enough how to address and reduce the barriers to learning that some pupils face. Leaders provide a range of activities that pupils enjoy. Nevertheless, these are not as sharply focused as they could be. Leaders do not ensure that the opportunities that they provide result in the desired impact on pupils' behaviour. For example, some pupils access additional support to help them to settle when feeling anxious. However, some of those who regularly have time out of class to take part in these activities do not develop useful strategies to use on their own. Similarly, pupils learn about people's differences and how important respect is. Despite this, some pupils move around the school with limited consideration of the needs or feelings of others.

Pupils learn about personal safety. They know how to stay safe when online and out and about in their community. Pupils learn about the changes that will happen to their body over time. They are respectful when talking about the differences that people may have. Most pupils are friendly and welcoming. However, some have less well-developed social skills. Their understanding of the need to follow rules and to be courteous is inconsistent. These pupils are not as well prepared as they could be to adhere to British laws and social conventions.

Pupils take part in a range of clubs and other activities that help them to develop new interests and self-confidence. Leaders make sure that all pupils are able to participate in these opportunities. However, they do not check that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities take up the clubs or leadership activities on offer. This means that some pupils who are likely to most benefit from these opportunities miss out.

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

The school is a calm and welcoming place. Caring staff make sure that pupils feel safe and happy. Pupils enjoy social times. They make the most of opportunities to explore the school's outdoor areas. Some pupils develop leadership skills through roles such as acting as 'buddies' for children when they join school, setting up the hall for daily worship or being members of the school council.

Children settle well in the early years. They develop self-confidence and independence. Despite this, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could as they progress through the school. There is variation in how well they are prepared for their next stages of education. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and for some other pupils who face challenges in their lives. Some of these pupils miss out on important aspects of their learning. They fall further behind their peers as a result.

Leaders do not address the barriers that some pupils face as well as they could. This means that some pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils struggle to access aspects of school life.

Most pupils attend school regularly and on time. They typically behave well as they move around the school. Incidents of unkindness, such as bullying, are dealt with diligently. However, leaders do not make sure that the highest expectations for behaviour are maintained. This is especially variable during lesson time. Pupils' learning is disrupted at times. When teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well, pupils do not enjoy their learning as they should.

Pupils learn about their local community. They take part in activities, such as parish events or singing at a local care home. This helps them to develop their understanding of how to make a positive contribution to society when they are older.

Next steps

- Leaders should identify and address areas of the school's work that need improvement quickly and effectively.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers find out what pupils most need to learn. They should ensure that teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and misconceptions in a timely manner. This is most important for pupils' foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics.

- Leaders should make sure that all pupils develop secure foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics so that they are better prepared for their next steps of education. In particular, pupils' transcriptional knowledge and skills should be developed more effectively and embedded more quickly.
 - Leaders should ensure that children in the early years are prepared as well as possible for their transition to Year 1 and beyond. They should ensure that children develop secure foundational knowledge in reading and writing.
 - Leaders should make sure that pupils who face additional challenges in life consistently receive the support that they need to achieve as well as they can. This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - Leaders should strengthen their systems and processes for monitoring and analysing emerging patterns of concerning attendance and behaviour so that they can intervene more effectively.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff adhere to the school's agreed policy for managing behaviour.
 - Leaders should make sure that the impact of their personal development programme is evident in how pupils behave and respond to others.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is John Hughes.

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 and other leaders at the school. An inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing board.

An inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority. They also spoke with a representative from the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The headteacher at the school is newly appointed. There were interim arrangements in place for the leadership of the school prior to the new headteacher taking up her post.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. Its last section 48 inspection took place in 2026.

The school does not currently make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Headteacher: Laura Rostron

Lead inspector:

Claire Cropper, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Wendy Tracey, Ofsted Inspector

Alex Keane, 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 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

207

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

210

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)

40.58%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.86%

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

21.74%

Well above 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	36%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	40%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	42%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	59%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	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	47%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	54%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	43%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	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	20%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	29%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	14%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	17%	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	43%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	36%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	30%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	30%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	29%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	59%	Below

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	20%	68%	-48 pp
2024/25 (revised)	29%	69%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	14%	67%	-53 pp
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 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	43%	80%	-37 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	36%	80%	-44 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 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	30%	78%	-48 pp
2024/25 (revised)	36%	78%	-43 pp
2023/24 (final)	29%	78%	-49 pp
2022/23 (final)	25%	77%	-52 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	30%	80%	-50 pp
2024/25 (revised)	29%	81%	-52 pp
2023/24 (final)	36%	79%	-44 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	25%	79%	-54 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.9%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.0%	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 term)	16.4%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.8%	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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