

Gildersome Primary School

Address: Town Street, LS27 7AB

Unique reference number (URN): 107848

Inspection report: 6 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Many pupils achieve well in school due to many improvements that have been made, despite the variability in curriculum and teaching. Most pupils reach national levels of learning by the end of key stage 2. On the whole, disadvantaged pupils also achieve well. This means that these pupils are ready for the next steps of their education.

Pupils in the early years develop the skills they need to be ready for Year 1. They develop important knowledge across many areas of learning. In key stage 1 and beyond, the majority of pupils move through the curriculum and secure knowledge across the different subjects they learn. For example, pupils can demonstrate their learning about the impact of humans on the planet and use this knowledge to debate with their peers. Pupils across year groups make secure progress through the curriculum from their starting points.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years arrive at school enthusiastically. Strong relationships between staff and children ensure they are happy and settled. This helps them to engage well with the different activities set out for them to explore.

The curriculum is carefully designed to give children the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for Year 1. Leaders have considered what they want pupils to learn in logical steps. Teachers and staff in the setting understand children's starting points. This means that pupils build their learning of key information before moving on to more complex tasks. Teaching to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional development helps children to build independence. Within the setting, adults interact with children well and support them to use new language and ask questions about their learning.

Children learn to read as soon as they start at school. They practise their sounds and learn how to blend sounds into words. Children enjoy a range of stories that are read to them by their teachers. This helps them to learn new words quickly.

The early years staff develop positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents speak proudly of how the school has supported children to begin their journey in school.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Although overall attendance rates in school show that most pupils are attending well, more vulnerable pupils do not attend as well as they should. Rates of frequent absence for pupils who are disadvantaged or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very high and not reducing. Leaders have developed a strategy to improve attendance. However, there has not been sufficient time to show the impact of this strategy.

Pupils' positive behaviour is established through the school's behaviour code. Pupils follow the expectations adults have of them. Staff are clear with their expectations and follow the school's behaviour policy. As a result, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They engage positively with each other in lessons and take turns when speaking. Pupils are supported well through the school's pastoral team. This helps them to make progress in their ability to regulate their behaviour. Leaders are swift to respond when behaviour does not meet the school's expectations. This enables them to provide the appropriate support and guidance for pupils. Any forms of bullying or discrimination, including instances online, are not tolerated and these are addressed quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The school has improved the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection. The curriculum in all subjects now considers the important knowledge pupils need to learn. This includes ensuring pupils do not miss out on important steps in learning when in mixed-age classes, such as in the early years. Additional opportunities for pupils to revisit previous learning are built into the curriculum. Pupils increasingly remember the knowledge that they have learned. Teachers model learning to pupils effectively and help them to practise their learning through research-informed approaches in the school. However, there is variation around how well this is implemented. Teachers know the needs of pupils well. Sometimes, there is variability in how well teachers use this information. Learning is generally adapted to meet the needs of pupils.

Some pupils in school have not secured aspects of learning in reading and writing. Leaders are aware of this, but action to improve this is in the early stages. This means that some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to catch up quickly with aspects of their learning such as practising their handwriting or using punctuation correctly. Reading books are well matched to pupils' stage of learning. However, there is variability in how often they are able to practise their reading fluency. This means they do not catch up as quickly as they could.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The pupil premium strategy considers the broad aspects of improvements needed to ensure these pupils achieve, belong and thrive. However, this is not well understood by staff. This means the actions that are taken in school to support these pupils are limited in their impact.

For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), staff know these pupils and their needs well. This allows them to support these pupils carefully. As a result, they make secure progress through the curriculum from their starting points. This includes making progress with their social and emotional development. Leaders have rightly focused on ensuring that learning is adapted for pupils who are working at different stages of learning. Pupils with more-complex needs are supported positively within the school's 'rainbow' provision.

Leaders are astute in ensuring that the provision, particularly for pupils with social and emotional mental health needs, is regularly reviewed. Leaders check that the support is working, and make any adaptations as required.

Leaders actively collaborate with local area partnerships. The school regularly works with other professionals to ensure that support for pupils with SEND helps them to achieve.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders at all levels show dedication and commitment to the school. They are committed to making the needed improvements. Leaders have identified actions in the right areas. However, some aspects of the school's work lack sufficient oversight. This means that the intended improvements are not regularly evaluated. This makes it difficult to tell whether these actions are leading to the required improvements. Some of the work is also at the earlier stages. This means it is too soon to evaluate how well these actions are improving aspects such as attendance.

Governors are committed to working at the school and demonstrate a secure understanding of their role. Governors challenge leaders and ask questions about information presented to them. At times, this information is not precise enough to ensure governors are able to fully scrutinise school performance and hold leaders to account further to drive actions more quickly.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that staff in the school care deeply about their pupils. Staff also speak positively about the commitment from leaders to ensuring their wellbeing is considered. This develops a sense of belonging and makes Gildersome a happy place to work. Staff appreciate the professional learning opportunities they are given. A range of training opportunities for teachers, middle and senior leaders allow them to develop in their roles.

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

Recent work has taken place to widen the personal development offer. This includes providing a broad range of extra-curricular clubs to develop pupils' talents and interests, such as baking, football and chess. The school gathers information about pupils who attend these clubs. However, this information is not used to ensure the attendance of those pupils who may benefit the most from this offer, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Visitors to school and trips out of school often link to the taught curriculum. For example, pupils have been on a visit to the local river to look for water insects. While some groups of pupils have the opportunity to take part in activities in the community, such as the school choir singing at a local care home, these experiences are not in place for all pupils. Some wider opportunities are not considered or designed with the needs of the most vulnerable pupils in mind.

The school's updated personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme ensures suitable coverage of a range of topics and themes. This includes the school's curriculum for relationships and sex education. Overall, the PSHE programme is taught well and generally develops pupils' knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe, including online.

Pupils benefit from effective pastoral support. Leaders know pupils and families well. They

ensure those most in need of this additional support receive it in a timely way.

From the early years onwards, pupils learn how to cooperate and play well together. The school is proud of the way older pupils carry out their roles as reading ambassadors and playground leaders to support their younger peers. This helps older pupils to develop a sense of personal responsibility.

Pupils are respectful when talking about others who attend their school. They state that no one should be treated differently and that everyone should be respected. Pupils have some knowledge of the fundamental British values. Opportunities such as voting for house captains help them to understand values such as democracy.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to Gildersome Primary School. They feel safe and are well cared for by staff. They make new friends and enjoy their learning. Pupils show kindness to each other, both in lessons and on the playground. Bullying is rare. The school's nurturing approach ensures pupils feel welcome in the school.

The school has improved the curriculum since the last inspection. However, for a small group of pupils who have not secured their basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics, actions put in place to address these gaps are at an early stage. Teaching does not consistently focus on addressing these gaps with the urgency needed. Despite this, by the time pupils reach the end of key stage 2, most pupils achieve well in national tests. This means they are ready for their next steps.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported and known well by staff. They take the time to fully understand and reduce the barriers which pupils with SEND may have. However, for some pupils, including those in receipt of pupil premium funding, barriers to learning and attendance are not swiftly identified and addressed. Oversight of this group of pupils and the provision in place for them is not well embedded.

The school considers pupils' wider development. It offers some extra opportunities to broaden their talents and interests through enrichment experiences. Pupils value taking part in African drumming and the school's established chess club. Although recent improvements to the extra-curricular offer mean staff now track attendance at clubs, not all pupils benefit from these activities. Pupils are increasingly engaging in opportunities within the community. This is helping them to prepare for life in modern Britain as they learn how to interact with a wide range of people.

Leaders are dedicated to continuing the improvements that have been made at the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers speak highly of the school and the care their children receive.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the barriers to learning for pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are clearly identified and that the actions to address these are effectively implemented by all staff.
 - Leaders should ensure that gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge and skills, particularly in reading and writing, are identified and closed quickly.
 - Leaders should ensure that the personal development provision is coherently planned to ensure all pupils, particularly those who face barriers to their learning, benefit from this.
 - Leaders should ensure that the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are in receipt of pupil premium improves, including rates of persistent absence.
 - Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently implemented effectively, leading to outcomes in all areas which are in line with or above national expectations.
 - Leaders should develop a more rigorous approach to identifying weaknesses in provision and the underlying causes and use this information to make sustainable improvements quickly and effectively.
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About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors are Nick Cullen and Jenny Dunhill.

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, leaders from the school, members of teaching and non-teaching staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection. An inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority and from the governing body.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mrs Caroline Hoyle

Lead inspector:

Katie Hall, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Zoe Helman, His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Gordon, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

380

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

446

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

18.08%

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

0.53%

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

16.32%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and 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	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	58%	61%	Close to average
2022/23	48%	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	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25	78%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	68%	73%	Close to average

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	70%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	66%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	73%	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	73%	73%	Close to average
2024/25	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24	79%	73%	Close to average
2022/23	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	42%	46%	Close to average
2024/25	50%	47%	Close to average
2023/24	54%	46%	Close to average
2022/23	11%	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	53%	62%	Below
2024/25	63%	63%	Close to average
2023/24	62%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	22%	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	61%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	63%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	54%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	67%	58%	Close to average

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	58%	60%	Close to average
2024/25	69%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	62%	59%	Close to average
2022/23	33%	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	42%	68%	-26 pp
2024/25	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24	54%	67%	-14 pp
2022/23	11%	66%	-55 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	53%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25	63%	81%	-18 pp
2023/24	62%	80%	-18 pp
2022/23	22%	78%	-56 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	61%	78%	-17 pp
2024/25	63%	78%	-16 pp
2023/24	54%	78%	-24 pp
2022/23	67%	77%	-11 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	58%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25	69%	81%	-12 pp
2023/24	62%	79%	-18 pp
2022/23	33%	79%	-46 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 terms)	5.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24	6.1%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23	5.9%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	15.4%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24	17.0%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23	16.0%	16.2%	Close to average

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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