

Isleham Church of England Primary School

Address: Malting Lane, Isleham, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5RZ

Unique reference number (URN): 110791

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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established clear and consistent systems to promote regular attendance. They check attendance closely and take swift and effective action when pupils begin to miss school. Leaders work proactively with families to remove barriers, for example by offering effective support and advice at an early stage. As a result, attendance is consistently high and above national figures for most pupils. Persistent absence is low and carefully tracked. Leaders review the impact of their actions systematically so that improvements are sustained.

Leaders and staff have created a calm and orderly environment where pupils understand expectations and behave well. Clear routines are in place across the school, and staff apply these consistently. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and settle quickly to their work. Bullying is uncommon and dealt with swiftly and effectively when it occurs. Pupils are confident that staff will help them if they have a concern. Leaders ensure that any form of discrimination or unkind behaviour is addressed promptly and appropriately. Staff make suitable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can meet expectations alongside their peers. As a result, behaviour supports learning consistently well across the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a clear and well-planned programme for personal development, which pupils experience through daily lessons and school life. Pupils learn about values such as respect, responsibility and kindness through teaching and routines. This learning is securely reflected in how pupils behave and interact with others. Older pupils take on roles of responsibility and consistently support younger pupils, for example by helping them settle into routines, supporting them at playtime and modelling positive behaviour. Pupils take genuine pride in these roles and understand the importance of caring for others.

The curriculum supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn about different communities, beliefs and ways of life, which helps them to show respect for others. They understand fairness, inclusion and the importance of treating people equally. They apply this consistently in school life, for example by listening to others' views, sharing responsibilities and making choices in class.

Relationships education and health education are taught clearly and appropriately for pupils' ages. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online, and how to look after their physical and emotional wellbeing. Pupils speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe and know who to talk to if they are worried. This knowledge helps them to make sensible and informed choices in school and beyond.

Leaders ensure that all pupils can fully participate in the wider life of the school. Pupils from different backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, join clubs, attend trips and take on responsibilities. Staff know pupils well and provide timely support when needed. This helps pupils feel safe, valued and ready to learn.

As a result, pupils consistently show confidence, respect and care for others. They are well prepared to play a positive role in their community and to move on successfully to the next stage of their education.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff have focused on improving pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They have strengthened how pupils practise important skills and use these across subjects. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically achieve well and gain in confidence.

Many pupils develop secure basic skills, including handwriting and number work, which support their learning more widely. National tests at the end of Year 6 show that, overall, pupils achieve broadly in line with national averages. Disadvantaged pupils usually achieve well, although this can vary between subjects.

Pupils build their skills over time and develop a broad knowledge in most subjects. However, in some subjects, learning is less secure where teachers have not ensured that key knowledge has been built on as consistently as it could. Many pupils, including those pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders provide clear direction for improving the curriculum and teaching. They have focused particularly on strengthening reading and writing across the school. This work has improved consistency and prepares pupils more readily for the next stage of their education.

Leaders and staff focus on securing early reading, writing and mathematics. The reading curriculum helps pupils become more confident readers who can access learning across subjects. Changes to the way writing is taught provides pupils with increased opportunities to practise and use their skills in different curriculum areas. These approaches help many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to engage more securely with learning.

Teachers usually plan lessons that build on what pupils already know. They explain ideas clearly and give pupils time to practise their learning. In some subjects, teaching helps pupils remember important knowledge and apply it independently. In others, learning is less secure because teachers do not always check pupils' understanding closely enough or adapt tasks accurately to meet pupils' needs.

The depth of learning varies between subjects. This means pupils' achievement is better in some areas than others. Teachers adapt lessons to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. This usually helps pupils to take part in

learning alongside their peers, although it does not consistently help all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a clear approach to the early years that focuses on helping children settle quickly and feel secure. Staff work closely with families to understand children's starting points and ensure a smooth start to school. This helps most children to build confidence and become ready to learn.

The curriculum supports children's early language, communication and understanding of number. Staff provide activities that encourage children to talk, listen and explore ideas. They regularly practise early skills, which helps them begin to build knowledge and confidence.

Staff use routines well so that children know what to expect and feel safe. They interact positively with children, asking questions and guiding activities to support learning. In many cases, this helps children to develop their understanding and stay engaged. At times, staff do not always check children's understanding closely enough to make sure learning builds consistently.

Staff support children with different needs so that they can take part in daily activities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers to learning are usually supported to join in with their peers. This helps children feel included and supported as they learn together.

Children generally progress well from their starting points. They develop confidence, independence and positive attitudes, which prepare them for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff work to identify pupils' needs early and reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing. They use the information they gather and discussions with families to understand pupils' needs and decide what support is required. This helps many pupils to take part fully in lessons and daily school life.

Leaders direct pupil premium funding towards academic support, emotional help and access to wider opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. This support helps pupils to stay engaged with learning, build confidence and take part in a wide range of school activities.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) by adapting lessons and providing additional help where needed. Staff know the pupils well and aim to help them succeed. Pupils with SEND are usually included in lessons and routines. In some cases, support is not shaped closely enough around pupils' individual needs or checked often enough to see how well it is working. This means that the difference this support makes varies for some pupils.

Staff work closely with families and external professionals to support pupils who have other barriers to their learning. This helps pupils to feel safe, settle into school routines and take

part in learning alongside their peers. Leaders make appropriate use of unregistered alternative provision. They review this provision regularly to make sure it meets pupils' needs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have set a clear direction for the school and taken effective steps to improve key areas, including behaviour, communication with families and the curriculum. Following recent changes in leadership, they have focused their work on the right priorities. Robust systems and high expectations improve consistency across the school.

Leaders have strengthened communication with parents and carers. Regular updates about school life and pupils' learning help families to feel informed and involved. Leaders are visible and approachable. This supports positive relationships with the school community.

Leaders support staff to carry out their roles effectively. Staff receive training and guidance, particularly in curriculum and teaching. This helps them to improve their classroom practice. Staff appreciate that leaders consider their workload and wellbeing, which contributes to a positive working environment.

Those responsible for governance understand the school's priorities and provide appropriate support and challenge. They visit the school, meet with leaders and check how improvements are being implemented. This helps them to hold leaders to account and focus on improving outcomes for pupils.

Many of the improvements introduced by leaders are recent. These changes are beginning to enhance pupils' experiences. Leaders continue to refine their work so that practice becomes embedded.

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

Pupils experience school life as calm and welcoming. It is shaped by the shared values of care, respect and kindness. Relationships are warm and trusting. The school's Christian character is shown in how pupils treat one another and in the sense of community they feel.

Pupils consistently behave well and show polite, respectful attitudes towards others. They understand what is expected of them and follow routines with confidence. Classrooms are orderly, which helps pupils focus and enjoy their lessons. Bullying is uncommon. Pupils feel listened to if they have a worry. They know that staff will deal with any problems quickly. As a result, pupils consistently feel safe in school.

Pupils attend regularly and are happy to come to school. They talk positively about their lessons and about the wider activities on offer. Pupils value opportunities beyond the classroom, including music, sport and performance. They enjoy taking part in these with their friends. These experiences consistently support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. They help them to build confidence, work well with others and believe in themselves.

Pupils generally enjoy their learning and show interest in their work. They describe lessons as engaging and are encouraged to try hard. Pupils typically progress well from their various starting points and are prepared appropriately for the next stage of their education. Children in the early years settle quickly, feel secure and grow in confidence through caring relationships and well-planned activities.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are usually included in everyday school life and benefit from adults who care about their welfare. Support for some is not always matched closely enough to their needs. This means that some pupils' experiences and progress vary.

Pupils consistently develop positive social and emotional skills within a caring community. Work continues to make sure that learning and support are equally effective for every pupil.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff know the precise actions required to enable all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to consistently receive the necessary support to help maximise their progress.
 - Leaders should continue to embed the school's actions to enhance the curriculum and teaching so that pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across a range of subjects.
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About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors in this school are Heather Davis and Karen Foster.

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 (OI) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders during the inspection. They also spoke with representatives from the governing body, the co-chairs of the governing body, pupils and parents and carers.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2024.

The school uses 3 unregistered alternative providers.

Headteacher: Matthew Brough

Lead inspector:

Sarah Stevens, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sally Garrett, Ofsted Inspector

Tim Leah, 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

210

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)

10.95%

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

1.43%

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

18.57%

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	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	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	78%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	83%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	62%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	57%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	59%	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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	80%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	22%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	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	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	56%	60%	Close to average

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	39%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	44%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	22%	68%	-45 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	69%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	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	61%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	56%	78%	-23 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	39%	78%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	77%	-44 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	44%	80%	-35 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33%	79%	-46 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 (3 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.1%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	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 (3 term)	8.6%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	14.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.7%	16.2%	Below

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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