

Holyhead Primary Academy

Address: Holyhead Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands, WS10 7PZ

Unique reference number (URN): 144630

Inspection report: 21 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically make steady progress as they move through the school. From the early years onwards, most pupils develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to access the curriculum successfully. Children build secure foundations in early reading and number. As a result, most are well prepared for the transition into key stage 1.

As pupils progress through the school, most continue to develop their reading fluency and comprehension. Where pupils need additional support, targeted interventions help them to close gaps in learning. Published outcomes show that attainment at the end of key stage 2 is broadly in line with national averages.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from high-quality support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is often higher than disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders are aware that further improvements are needed to increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard, particularly in reading, and have appropriate plans in place to address this. As a result, pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with national averages and shows a steady improvement over time. Leaders place a strong emphasis on helping pupils attend regularly and arrive on time. They review attendance information routinely and take swift action where concerns are identified. Staff work closely with families to explore and address any barriers to attendance, drawing on external support where appropriate. As a result, rates of persistent absence are reducing, including for pupils who are more vulnerable. Pupils are welcomed into school each morning by adults who know them well, helping them to settle quickly and feel ready to learn.

Behaviour across the school is calm and purposeful. Clear expectations are understood by pupils, who typically demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms are orderly and routines are well established. As a result, lessons begin promptly and learning time is maximised. Staff address low-level disruption quickly and sensitively. Relationships between pupils and adults are respectful and supportive. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that staff will deal with any concerns promptly and effectively. Staff make appropriate adjustments to support pupils who find it harder to manage their behaviour. This ensures that all pupils feel safe, valued and able to learn well.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children make a secure and positive start in the early years. They are welcomed into a calm and nurturing environment where routines are well established. Staff know the children well and quickly identify their needs. As a result, children feel safe, settled and confident to explore their learning. Children behave well, play cooperatively and demonstrate increasing

independence in everyday tasks. These positive foundations are established from Nursery onwards.

Leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum that supports progression across all areas of learning. There is a strong emphasis on communication and language. Staff consistently model language and introduce appropriate vocabulary during guided activities. Generally, these interactions help children to express their ideas more clearly. However, there are occasions where staff interactions are not as meaningful as they could be. As a result, not all opportunities to extend children's language, vocabulary and knowledge are maximised.

Reading is prioritised from the outset. Children in Nursery and Reception follow a structured phonics programme. Teaching is systematic and supports children to build early reading and writing skills. Staff identify children who need additional support and provide timely intervention.

Staff build positive relationships with parents and carers. They share information regularly and offer guidance to support learning at home. As a result, children are well prepared for the transition into Year 1 and are ready for the next stage of their education.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders place inclusion at the centre of their work. They have a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and those who are known to children's social care. Leaders use a range of information to identify pupils' needs promptly. This identification starts from Nursery and ensures that support is put in place quickly and reviewed regularly.

Staff receive appropriate training to support pupils with additional needs and to implement the graduated approach. Teaching is adapted so that learning is accessible and ambitious. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and evaluate the impact of additional support. Where support is not having the intended effect, leaders take timely action to adjust provision. As a result, pupils are supported to engage positively in lessons and to make progress from their starting points.

Pupils with complex needs are well supported through the school's high-quality enhanced provision. Staff have a detailed understanding of pupils as individuals and adapt support thoughtfully to meet their needs. This ensures that pupils are well supported and make secure progress across the curriculum from their varied starting points.

Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used purposefully to reduce barriers to learning. Leaders work closely with families and external professionals to strengthen support. As a result, pupils feel valued and are supported to achieve well and thrive.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and those responsible for governance work collaboratively and share a clear and ambitious vision for the school. They have a secure understanding of the school's context, strengths and aspects that require further refinement. For example, the need for a whole-

school focus on improving the teaching of foundational skills in handwriting and spelling. Leaders' decisions are rooted firmly in pupils' best interests, particularly for those who are disadvantaged or who have SEND.

The trust provides effective oversight and support. Trust leaders know the school well and work closely with leaders and governors to ensure that improvement priorities are sharply focused and aligned. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively and provide appropriate challenge alongside practical support to strengthen leadership capacity and provision.

Governors fulfil their strategic roles effectively. They have detailed knowledge of the school and bring a suitable range of expertise and experience to their roles. Governors ensure that statutory duties are met, including those relating to safeguarding and equality. They provide a balanced mix of support and challenge while remaining mindful of staff wellbeing and workload.

Staff are positive about working at the school and feel well supported by leaders and the trust. Many describe the school as a 'family', where relationships are built on trust, care and mutual respect. High-quality professional development is well planned and aligned to school priorities. Staff, including those at the early stages of their careers, feel confident to adapt their practice to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders, including governors and the trust, foster effective relationships with parents and carers. Parents express high levels of trust in the school and appreciate the care, guidance and communication that staff consistently provide.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a coherent and carefully planned personal development programme that supports pupils to become confident, considerate and responsible individuals. Through a well-sequenced curriculum and strong pastoral systems, pupils learn how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy, including understanding risks to their wellbeing online and offline. As a result, pupils talk confidently about managing their emotions and know which trusted adults they can turn to if they need support. Relationships education helps pupils develop a secure understanding of respectful and positive friendships, and older pupils are well prepared for the changes associated with growing up.

Leaders place high importance on equality and inclusion. Pupils learn that differences should be valued and that everyone deserves fairness and respect. This is reinforced consistently through curriculum content, assemblies and themed events. Opportunities such as visits to local places of worship enable pupils to reflect on beliefs and traditions beyond their own experience. As a result, they develop a thoughtful appreciation of the diverse society in which they live.

Leaders strengthen pupils' moral and social development through clear expectations for behaviour and opportunities to contribute positively to school life. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of fundamental British values, including democracy and the rule of law. They can explain how these are practised in school, for example through the behaviour system and the work of the school council.

A wide range of extra-curricular clubs, educational visits and visitors enrich pupils' experiences and help them to develop interests and talents. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are fully supported to access these opportunities. Leaders also track pupils' participation in roles of responsibility carefully so that no pupil is overlooked. As a result, pupils feel valued, included and well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders' vision for what pupils learn across the curriculum is not fully implemented. They recognise that it is not delivered consistently well across some subjects and year groups. As a result, a significant minority of pupils currently have gaps in essential basic knowledge, such as handwriting and spelling. Some teachers use a variety of assessment types to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. However, this is not consistently delivered across all subjects. As a result, some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, engage in learning that does not build precisely on what they already know and can do.

Leaders have developed an ambitious and suitably sequenced curriculum. It clearly sets out the key knowledge pupils should learn at each stage. Staff generally understand the curriculum aims and demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Leaders ensure that teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. Developing pupils' language is a priority of leaders. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers help pupils to develop their understanding of subject-specific language and use it in their work.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum. They use this insight to shape improvement priorities. Consequently, leaders are taking deliberate action to strengthen assessment, handwriting and spelling across the school. However, these actions are yet to have the intended impact.

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

Pupils are proud to belong to Holyhead Primary Academy and speak positively about the school's values of 'Excite, Explore and Excel'. They arrive each morning eager to learn and are greeted warmly by staff, who know them well. This consistent welcome helps pupils to feel safe, settled and valued. Pupils describe a strong sense of belonging and positive relationships are evident between pupils and adults across the school.

Pupils enjoy learning and show positive attitudes in lessons. They typically achieve in line with other pupils nationally and are prepared well for the next stage of their education. In many subjects, pupils can typically explain what they have learned and make links with prior learning. However, teaching does not consistently address errors in pupils' basic knowledge and skills, including reading, handwriting and spelling. As a result, some pupils develop

inaccuracies in their knowledge and skills that persist and limit how securely they build new learning.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand the school's expectations and follow routines consistently. This begins in the early years, where children learn to manage their behaviour and cooperate with others. Consequently, the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are polite, kind and considerate. They say that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will listen to them and act quickly when concerns arise.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils. They identify barriers to learning early and work closely with families to provide effective support. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may be disadvantaged. As a result, pupils attend regularly and engage positively with school life.

Pupils value the range of wider opportunities on offer. These include clubs, educational visits and leadership roles, such as school councillors and reading leaders. Pupils take pride in these opportunities. These experiences help pupils develop confidence and responsibility and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff identify and address pupils' knowledge gaps and misconceptions routinely and swiftly so that errors are not repeated and pupils can progress through the curriculum unimpeded.
 - Leaders should ensure that the school's approach to teaching reading, handwriting and spelling are implemented effectively and enable pupils to quickly secure the foundational knowledge and skills that they need for future success.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir Mark Grundy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Conway Jones.

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 school leaders including the principal, vice-principal and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer and representatives of the trust, including chair of the trust board, and the chair of the local governing body during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, at social times and met with groups of pupils.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school includes a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This provision caters for 12 pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

The school runs an on-site nursery for children age 2 years.

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club managed by the school.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Principal: Natalie Shipley

Lead inspector:

James Dean, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Nicola Price, Ofsted Inspector

Sam Cosgrove, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

253

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

244

Close to 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)

49.05%

Well 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

2.77%

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

18.18%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above 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	60%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	60%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	65%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	60%	Close to average

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	74%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	80%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	72%	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	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	76%	73%	Close to average

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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	65%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	44%	44%	Close to average

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	79%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	76%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	60%	Above

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	79%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	86%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	74%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	76%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	69%	59%	Close to average

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	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	65%	69%	-5 pp
2023/24 (final)	64%	67%	-3 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	66%	-23 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	79%	80%	-1 pp
2024/25 (revised)	76%	81%	-4 pp
2023/24 (final)	79%	80%	-1 pp
2022/23 (final)	81%	78%	3 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	79%	78%	1 pp
2024/25 (revised)	82%	78%	4 pp
2023/24 (final)	86%	78%	8 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	69%	77%	-9 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	74%	80%	-5 pp
2024/25 (revised)	76%	81%	-4 pp
2023/24 (final)	79%	79%	-1 pp
2022/23 (final)	69%	79%	-10 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)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	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 (2 term)	9.3%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.7%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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