

John Mayne Church of England Primary School

Address: High Street, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8AL

Unique reference number (URN): 149623

Inspection report: 25 February 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' work is successfully improving pupils' attendance. Attendance rates, including those for disadvantaged pupils, show a clear upward trend. Leaders track attendance with precise analysis. They use this information to guide early communication with families and build strong relationships with the community. This helps to remove barriers that stop pupils from coming to school. This approach has been particularly successful for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their attendance has risen because leaders work with care and consistency. Persistent absence has significantly improved but remains too high for some pupils. Leaders know this. Their strategies are sensible and targeted. Leaders recognise that they must continue this focused work.

The school creates a safe and respectful environment. Pupils behave well. They show respect and kindness. Staff understand the behaviour policy and consistently follow it. They also make subtle adjustments for pupils with SEND. This helps all pupils feel included. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They work together and support each other and they enjoy playtimes. Pupils report no worries about bullying or any other issues. They know what bullying is and why it is wrong. Staff act quickly and fairly when problems arise. Leaders do not tolerate harassment, discrimination or unkind behaviour. Pupils trust adults. They feel known and cared for.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school generally identifies and assesses pupils' individual needs well. For example, from the start of Reception, baseline assessments inform targeted provision. This provision usually meets a wide range of needs, including those of disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known or previously known to children's social care. Staff create specific and effective education plans with clear targets. These guide classroom practice and well-chosen interventions. For pupils with the most complex needs, leaders make thoughtful adaptations that reduce barriers to learning and support wellbeing. Leaders monitor pupils' progress and review the impact of the support given. They refine support and ensure reasonable adjustments remain appropriate.

Staff training on the school's approach to meeting pupils' needs generally ensures that staff understand how to support pupils' next steps. The school works effectively with families, ensuring that the voice of parents and carers contributes to reviews and shapes decisions. The school also liaises effectively with professionals and external agencies, including a highly positive collaboration with the virtual school and other specialist services. Together, these aspects help maintain a consistent offer in and beyond school. The school makes effective use of pupil premium funding to support pupils' academic and personal development.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school generally maintains a clear and consistent focus on developing pupils as responsible, open-minded and reflective citizens. Staff provide a wide range of meaningful

experiences that encourage pupils to think about their own beliefs and understand the views and values of others. Pupils learn right from wrong and engage with ethical ideas in ways that suit their stage of development. The school offers many opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests, such as learning the clarinet, taking part in sporting events and holding roles of responsibility. Leaders generally ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access these experiences. Pupils relish these opportunities and speak with enthusiasm about them. The personal development programme begins from the Reception class and builds gradually and securely through the school. Staff teach pupils how to stay safe, and this includes helpful work with local police teams and the fire service. Pupils also learn about risks to their wellbeing, both online and offline, and understand how to make sensible choices.

The school's programme for personal, social and health education, including relationships, is generally well structured and appropriate. Pupils learn about different family types, understand disability and know why prejudicial language is unacceptable. Pupil leadership roles help them to understand democratic ideas and the fundamental British values, although their recall of these concepts is not consistent. Pupils develop a growing appreciation of cultural diversity and heritage. They talk about current events, beliefs and behaviours with confidence. Creative, artistic and cultural experiences, such as trips to a local football club and being part of the local rural singing festivals, broaden their understanding further. Overall, the school's work generally supports pupils' character development and strengthens their preparation for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils do not achieve well enough in national tests and examinations. Attainment across the school falls below leaders' expectations. Pupils make some progress through the curriculum, but this progress is uneven across year groups and key stages. They improve their core knowledge over time, yet gaps in writing and mathematical fluency remain and need more focused work. Too many pupils have not secured the basic skills they need to be academically ready for their next stages. They show emotional maturity and a positive attitude to learning, but this does not always match their academic outcomes.

Disadvantaged pupils fall behind their peers, and the gap is not closing quickly enough. Leaders understand these weaknesses and have begun work to address them, but it is too early to see the impact of their actions. As a result, pupils are only partly prepared for the demands of their future education.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Staff do not consistently implement the curriculum well enough. As a result, the school's broad and ambitious curriculum is not yet realised in practice. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in curriculum quality and teaching. However, their programme of improvement is not complete. As a result, some areas of the

wider curriculum remain insufficiently defined and the sequencing of knowledge in the wider curriculum lacks clarity.

Staff have not had enough professional development to strengthen their subject knowledge or their understanding of how to teach the curriculum as leaders intend. Therefore, staff do not always address misconceptions in pupils' learning and sometimes make decisions about what to teach in isolation, without reference to the wider sequence. This leads to uneven progression over time and pupils' gaps in learning are not closed quickly enough.

Some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have gaps in reading, writing and mathematics that teaching does not consistently address. Assessment practices vary and activities and resources do not always match pupils' needs or extend their knowledge and understanding effectively. Consequently, adaptations and reasonable adjustments are inconsistent and do not secure the basic skills that pupils need for their future learning.

Early years

Needs attention 

The Reception curriculum misses important opportunities for children to systematically remember and apply their learning in parts of the provision. Staff do not always extend children's thinking because they have not had enough training to recognise and use these moments well. This is most noticeable in the outdoor area, where opportunities to build experiences and repeat language in a clear sequence are not developed well enough. This impacts the quality of the interactions between staff and children. As a result, some children do not achieve as well as they could.

Although staff prioritise reading and are rightly focusing on the teaching of phonics, children do not secure their phonics knowledge well enough over time. In addition, gaps in the approach to writing are particularly evident and not addressed well enough.

Personal, social and emotional development is a clear strength. Staff prepare children well for routines and relationships and work closely with parents and carers. This has improved attendance and engagement. A well-considered settling-in programme gives children a nurturing start when they enter the Reception class. Children maintain focus, work well with others and form warm relationships. This supports their readiness for the next stage of learning.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders' ability to make rapid improvements is limited by the changes that are taking place at a trust level. Leaders know the school's strengths. They also know its weaknesses. They have set clear priorities for improvement. However, they have not built the consistency or momentum they want. The trust has recently given the school a large package of support. This impact of this support is not yet clear. Governance focuses on challenging leaders more effectively and meeting its statutory responsibilities. However, some systems are still new and need time and further support to make these changes secure.

Leaders at all levels put pupils' welfare first. They focus strongly on disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care.

Leaders act to keep these pupils safe and able to learn.

Leaders have focused staff training on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Staff appreciate this training. However, classroom teaching has not had the same focus. The school is working to improve communication with parents and carers. Leaders are trying to balance improvement with staff wellbeing, although the fast pace of change and limited training have increased staff workload.

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

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging in this small village school and they take pride in its long history. The school has served the community since 1522 and pupils feel connected to the past and to each other. They enjoy learning about the school's place in local history and value the facts they discover. For example, pupils are keen to share that the site is linked to the first-known crime-scene photograph from a Victorian scandal. Pupils form consistently positive relationships with staff and with one another. They show respect, kindness and cheerfulness each day. They take part in school life with enthusiasm.

Pupils enjoy learning, but they do not achieve as well as they could. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, engage well in lessons. Plans to support their needs are clear, but staff do not apply these plans consistently, so barriers to learning remain. Pupils with any form of disadvantage have positive attitudes to learning, yet the support they receive in class does not always help them make secure progress. As a result, gaps in knowledge and skills begin in the Reception class and do not close quickly enough before pupils reach the end of Year 6. Pupils' experiences of the curriculum and teaching do not fully prepare them for their next steps.

Pupils feel safe because staff provide daily care and effective pastoral support. Pupils know who will help them and trust adults to deal with any concern. They say bullying is rare and handled quickly. Pupils attend increasingly well and arrive on time. Their positive behaviour and attitudes are evident in all that they do. They understand how to be active and responsible members of their school and local community. They show pride in their roles as 'Good Shepherds' and play leaders.

Next steps

- Leaders should gain a clear strategic view of the school's effectiveness which is accurately monitored and used to inform professional development, create capacity and bring about improvement.
- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented in line with their intentions, and that staff teach and adapt materials for pupils effectively, focus on the most important knowledge, present concepts accurately and check pupils' understanding systematically.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils' gaps in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently addressed so that they are well prepared for their next stage in education,

and that this is reflected in improved outcomes for pupils in national tests and examinations and across the wider curriculum.

- Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years receive appropriate professional development so that children deepen and consolidate their knowledge and skills, particularly in phonics and writing but also across the curriculum, in the classroom and outside.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Tenterden Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathan Wilden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Fiona Coombe.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with staff, governors, trustees, the chief executive, the diocese, pupils and parents during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2023.

The school does not use alternative provision.

Headteacher : Helen Tester

Lead inspector:

Toby Martlew, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Paul Bateman, Ofsted Inspector

Alice Early, 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 25 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

100

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 272

School capacity

140

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)

31.00%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

0.00%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.00%

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

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		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	27%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	61%	Above
2022/23		60%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	64%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	64%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	90%	72%	Above
2022/23		71%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	27%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	5.5%	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)	20.9%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	28.0%	14.6%	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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