

St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Preston

Address: Victoria Park Avenue, Lea, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 1RP

Unique reference number (URN): 149312

Inspection report: 3 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 maintain high expectations for attendance. They instil positive attitudes in pupils and their families. This has contributed to attendance being in line with, or better than, national averages. In particular, attendance for disadvantaged pupils is regularly above the national average for this group. Leaders make effective use of clear, well-established systems to monitor pupils' absences. For instance, they use attendance data effectively to identify any patterns. They provide targeted support for pupils who experience barriers to attendance, including disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have established high expectations for behaviour, which staff uphold and pupils meet. On the whole, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and conduct themselves well throughout the school day. They are particularly kind to one another during social times. This creates a harmonious environment when pupils play. Discrimination is not tolerated at the school and any occurrences are dealt with appropriately. Leaders ensure that pupils who might struggle to manage their emotions, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the right support to integrate fully into school life and to manage their feelings when they are unsettled.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established efficient systems for the identification and assessment of pupils' individual needs. This often results in swift, targeted support for pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known to children's social care. Leaders ensure that they collaborate effectively with external professionals, parents, carers and the local authority to ensure that pupils get the right levels of help to achieve. This support, which includes any necessary reasonable adjustments or adaptations, is often effective in reducing barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face.

Leaders have suitable systems and strategies in place to evaluate the impact of the support that they provide to pupils. This includes the school's use of additional funding. Leaders routinely consider the impact of this support, including the effectiveness of any short-term, targeted teaching interventions. They take sufficient action to alter this support in response to their findings.

On the whole, staff receive suitable training on how to adapt their practices to support pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable groups. Typically, this leads to pupils being supported well to access their learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Since the school became part of a trust, leaders have successfully navigated significant change. This has paved the way for ongoing improvement work to succeed. For example, leaders have managed the transition to a new staff and leadership team. They have steadily transitioned a range of systematic and operational matters to align with those of the trust.

Leaders have also updated some curriculum approaches. They ensure that staff share a collective understanding of curriculum intentions.

Leaders possess an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They have logically prioritised improvements in the early years and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities as essential building blocks for pupils' long-term success. Leaders are currently taking action to address other areas that need improvement, such as the teaching of reading, handwriting and spelling. Although these improvements are largely still in their infancy, this is a result of sensible strategic decision-making within the constraints of the school's context. Leaders are beginning to see reasonable progress towards many of their school improvement priorities. They ensure that the pace of school improvement is as swift as can be reasonably expected.

Trust leaders, including those responsible for governance, fulfil their duties effectively. They provide robust challenge and make appropriate strategic decisions that benefit all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Leaders are sensitive to the workload of staff and take appropriate account of this when introducing changes. They provide effective mentoring for early career teachers and ensure that all staff access appropriate training and professional learning opportunities.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme is well structured and meets the needs of its pupils. The content is appropriately sequenced and provides a solid foundation for pupils' broader growth and preparedness for life in modern Britain.

Overall, pupils develop an appropriate understanding of fundamental British values. They show a particularly deep sense of tolerance and morality. Pupils also have a clear sense of right and wrong and show genuine respect for the differences of others. For example, pupils demonstrate warmth and care towards classmates from different backgrounds and those with additional needs. This inclusive atmosphere is bolstered by a range of opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. For example, pupils undertake school leadership roles such as play leaders and librarians.

Pupils reflect thoughtfully on their personal beliefs and engage with ethical issues during structured debates and assemblies. They consider their own experiences while learning to respect the values held by others.

Pupils have opportunities across different curriculum subjects, such as history and art and design, to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and heritage. In these subjects, pupils explore significant historical figures and successful artists from around the world who use unique and interesting artistic approaches. Alongside this, the relationships and health education curriculum helps pupils to understand healthy living. They learn to recognise risks to their wellbeing, both online and offline. Pupils understand how to identify safe boundaries and foster healthy relationships with others.

Leaders ensure that the personal development programme is an entitlement for all. They take proactive steps to support disadvantaged pupils and to ensure that financial or social barriers do not prevent access to the school's extra-curricular offer. As a result,

disadvantaged pupils increasingly access opportunities to pursue new activities and interests.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

There is a mixed picture of achievement within the school. This is because pupils across several year groups, including pupils who are disadvantaged, do not develop their proficiency and skills in the fundamentals of reading, writing and spelling at a consistent rate. Due to inconsistencies in the quality of checks that teachers carry out on pupils' learning, the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills do not close quickly enough. This means that some pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

That said, pupils generally develop an appropriate body of knowledge across many other curriculum subjects, including subject-specific vocabulary. For example, pupils recall their learning in science with clarity and enthusiasm. In history, pupils understand the concept of chronology and features of particular eras. Additionally, pupils' outcomes in national assessments at the end of Year 6 are largely positive, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Pupils do not develop their proficiency and skills in the fundamentals of reading and writing, including spelling, as quickly as they could. This is sometimes compounded by inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' checks and feedback on pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils do not regularly get the help they need to address errors and gaps in their knowledge. As a result, some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not develop proficiency with key skills as well as they could. They continue to repeat errors over time, which hinders their rates of progress. Leaders have taken remedial action, such as the introduction of new teaching approaches and schemes. However, these changes have not had enough time to embed.

Aspects of the school's curriculum delivery are inconsistent. Leaders are fully alert to these. They have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and make logical decisions to bring about improvements. For example, their refinements to the curriculum have ensured that it is more ambitious, balanced and logically ordered. Leaders ensure that staff receive the guidance, training or mentoring that they need to implement the curriculum as intended. This includes how to make suitable adaptations for disadvantaged pupils where appropriate. Consequently, pupils often develop a secure breadth of knowledge across much of the wider curriculum.

Early years

Needs attention 

Children across the early years receive an inconsistent quality of education. Work to develop the early years curriculum is very recent. Leaders have put in place a broad and

ambitious curriculum, but its implementation remains in the initial stages. While recent changes have led to early signs of improvement, they have not had enough time to fully impact upon ongoing weaknesses in classroom practice.

Staff interactions with children are not consistently purposeful. This sometimes causes children to miss out on meaningful opportunities to develop their knowledge, vocabulary and communication skills. Staff sometimes fail to guide children's learning and address emerging misconceptions when children are engaged in learning activities or purposeful play. Occasionally, staff do not support children to engage well with different areas of learning inside and outside of the classroom. In part, this is because some resources and activities are not of high quality or are uninviting. Collectively, these deficiencies limit how well children develop and prepare for the demands of Year 1.

Leaders prioritise reading in the early years. They work closely with parents and carers to support children's learning at home. Leaders have made positive changes to early reading approaches, including a new pre-phonics programme for the youngest children to build their awareness of sounds. Nonetheless, staff's delivery of phonics, like other aspects of the curriculum, is variable in quality. Consequently, children do not build their phonics knowledge as quickly as they could.

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

The school's motto of 'you are precious in my eyes' is fully lived out through the warm and caring relationships across the school community. This helps pupils feel valued and safe. It fosters a strong sense of belonging. It also helps pupils to form positive bonds with their classmates. Pupils rarely experience any kind of bullying. If isolated cases occur, staff deal with them decisively. Consequently, pupils are happy to come to school and attend regularly. When at school, they behave well and demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning.

In recent years, pupils have typically attained at least close to national averages in the writing and mathematics tests at the end of key stage 2. However, some pupils, including children in the early years, do not develop the knowledge and skills they need. This is particularly so in reading and writing. Some pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have gaps in their learning, which cause barriers to their success. These are not addressed by teachers as swiftly and effectively as they could be. As a result, some pupils are not well prepared for their next steps in education.

Beyond the academic, pupils' personal development is catered for well. Pupils develop their awareness and sense of responsibility for others. For instance, the school supports national charities and local organisations that help the homeless. This helps pupils to develop a sense of community and citizenship. They experience numerous curriculum enrichment opportunities, such as visits to different places of worship, a science centre and a Tudor house. Pupils also access a variety of extra-curricular activities, including music, dance and a range of sports clubs and competitions. These opportunities are open to all, which further underpins the fair and inclusive school environment.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff deliver the early years curriculum consistently well, making sure that interactions are purposeful and enhance children's learning.
 - 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 new approaches 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.
 - Trust leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to provide both challenge and support to ensure leaders' planned actions are implemented effectively and achieve the intended impact over time.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Peter Duffy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Roger Mason.

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, who is also the interim special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), and other senior leaders, including the CEO and the trust director of primary education. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese.

The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, including its chair. He also met with a group of trustees that included the chair of the trust board.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in September 2024.

The school converted to become an academy in December 2022 and joined Mater Ecclesiae Catholic Multi Academy Trust at the same time. This inspection was the school's first inspection since its predecessor school of the same name was inspected in June 2017.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

The majority of staff have been appointed to their positions since the school converted to an academy. This includes the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the SENDCo and the early years leader.

Headteacher: Roy Turner

Lead inspector:

David Spruce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Cleo Cunningham, Ofsted Inspector

Gaynor Roberts, 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 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

234

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

226

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)

18.06%

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

0.85%

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

14.96%

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)	58%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
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)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
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)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
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)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	90%	73%	Above
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)	63%	46%	Above
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%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	88%	62%	Above
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)	75%	58%	Above
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)	88%	59%	Above
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)	63%	67%	-5 pp
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)	88%	80%	8 pp
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)	75%	78%	-3 pp
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)	88%	79%	8 pp
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)	4.1%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	5.9%	Below

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)	6.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	9.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%	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.

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

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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