

St John's CofE (A) Primary School

Address: Wheatly Avenue, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 6SB

Unique reference number (URN): 124309

Inspection report: 13 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders strive hard to improve school attendance. Pupils typically attend well. Leaders closely analyse pupil attendance. This enables the right support to be put in place at the right time for those pupils whose attendance is causing concern. This work has led to attendance improving over time, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, the number of children who are persistently absent has decreased compared to previous years.

Across school, pupils' behaviour is consistently positive. Effective routines are in place which ensure a calm and orderly environment. At social times, children interact well with each other and show respect to adults and peers. This is because leaders ensure that staff apply the school's behaviour policy with high levels of consistency. Consequently, pupils know what is expected of their behaviour and respond well to these expectations.

There is a particularly harmonious atmosphere across the school. Learning is rarely disrupted and pupils are focused and keen to learn in lessons. Leaders do not tolerate bullying and quickly address any form of discrimination effectively. Pupils talk positively about their relationships with school staff and their peers.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad, balanced and well-sequenced curriculum from the early years to Year 6. They have strengthened the English and mathematics curriculum so pupils build knowledge securely over time.

Leaders ensure staff know how to deliver the curriculum as expected. This work is rooted in educational research. They expect pupils to secure strong foundations for learning across the curriculum, with a clear emphasis on language and vocabulary development. Broadly pupils do secure this knowledge.

Staff typically address gaps in pupils' reading and mathematical knowledge well. However, staff do not teach the key knowledge needed for writing as securely. This slows pupils' progress in writing, particularly those who have not experienced the full writing programme from the start.

Leaders provide staff with the training and guidance needed to teach phonics effectively. Pupils in Year 2 and key stage 2 who need to catch up receive targeted support to become fluent readers. Newly arrived pupils also receive effective tailored support in reading.

Staff usually adapt learning well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. However, some staff are less skilled at matching adaptations precisely to pupils' needs. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that children have a successful start to their learning in the early years. Children feel safe and settle successfully into an environment that is engaging and stimulating. Leaders give careful thought to how the curriculum supports children's progress through the early years.

The curriculum is sequenced, taking into account the key knowledge that children need to progress into Year 1. For example, in mathematics, children learn to manipulate objects and sort numbers from early in Nursery. In Reception, children demonstrate high levels of concentration and accuracy when drawing flowers in mathematics work, repeatedly counting to check their answer.

Leaders prioritise children's reading and spoken skills to support language and vocabulary development. Children learn about sounds in words in Nursery. This prepares them well to learn phonics in Reception where children secure their knowledge of phonics. They read words and sentences with growing fluency.

Staff and child interactions are positive. Staff support children well, particularly children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to children securing knowledge typically well.

Work between parents and carers and school supports children well. This enables families to support learning at home and celebrate achievements in school.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs swiftly. Leaders closely track the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps staff understand pupils' needs as soon as possible. Leaders maintain high expectations and match support carefully to each pupil. When needed, they seek specialist guidance to remove barriers to learning and promote pupils' wellbeing.

Leaders set targets for pupils with SEND that are specific, measurable and achievable. They review these regularly and adjust learning activities if necessary. Staff receive training in this approach and typically meet pupils' needs well. They use this advice and guidance to best support pupils.

Leaders monitor pupils' learning in lessons and in specific interventions carefully. This means they have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of these areas of the school's work.

Leaders work in partnership with other agencies. Local SEND partnerships offer useful training and outreach, and work with the local authority ensures support for pupils known to children's social care.

Staff use evidence to inform decisions and strategies regarding the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders check that staff use these strategies consistently.

Staff are well trained to support disadvantaged pupils. This has a positive impact on the achievement that many pupils make academically, personally and socially.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an effective understanding of the context of their school. They use this knowledge to identify suitable areas for improvement. They are effectively addressing issues with regard to pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics. They have ensured that weaknesses with writing are being addressed. This is having an impact, particularly where pupils have experienced the new writing programme in full.

Leaders ensure that staff receive an effective and research-led professional learning programme which enables staff to fulfil their respective roles well. Leaders have empowered subject leaders to have oversight of and to further develop their curriculum areas. However, there is still some work to do to ensure that this information is being used most effectively to support pupils' learning.

Governors are well informed and carry out their roles diligently. They know that the school has improved significantly in some areas since the previous inspection. Governors effectively support leaders to continue improvement.

Staff are very positive about the support they receive from leaders. One comment from staff stated, 'Leaders have established a positive culture where staff feel supported and motivated.' This is typical of the views of many staff.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the progress made by leaders across all aspects of the school's work, particularly in recent years.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a well-planned programme that runs throughout the curriculum. Pupils learn to respect themselves and others. They confidently talk about making decisions based on their morals. For example, they explain that 'two wrongs do not make a right'.

The school's personal, social, health and economic curriculum is carefully sequenced from the early years onwards. Leaders adapt the curriculum to reflect the needs of the local community. Pupils understand healthy relationships and know they have rights. They learn how to manage online and offline risks. This enables pupils to stay safe in and out of school.

Pastoral support meets pupils' needs well. Skilled staff provide valuable emotional and wellbeing support for pupils and families. Many parents and pupils use this support effectively. Staff teach pupils how to look after their mental health through the use of calming resources and making sure pupils understand how to manage their emotions. Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy. They understand the importance of physical activity. Children in the early years learn effective toothbrushing routines.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different religions and relationships. Pupils show high levels of tolerance and empathy. Pupils explained, 'It doesn't matter who is in it, everyone is

family.'

Pupils take part in a wide range of opportunities that broaden their experiences and develop their talents. These include 'singing hands' performances and care home and hospital visits. Pupils regularly successfully compete in local sporting competitions. Leaders also provide enrichment experiences such as cycle riding skills, financial education, visits to museums and whole school theatre trips.

Pupils feel heard and have a voice. They enjoy participating in the school council and are proud that they have supported improvements such as providing more equipment for pupils at playtimes.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils who arrive at the school at times other than in Reception Year do not experience and benefit from the full curriculum. This affects the outcomes of these pupils and how well they achieve.

Outcomes in writing remain stubbornly low. Leaders have addressed this with the implementation of a structured writing programme. Pupils who have experienced this curriculum in full are achieving well in writing. However, many pupils still have gaps in important writing knowledge because of previous inconsistencies with the curriculum. Teaching has not helped pupils to close these gaps as effectively as it could.

Many pupils achieve well from their starting points. Work on phonics, reading and maths is having an impact and pupils are achieving better in recent years. This is beginning to be demonstrated in pupils achievement in national curriculum tests in Year 6.

The school typically supports disadvantaged pupils well. These pupils achieve well in reading. Staff ensure that gaps in mathematics knowledge for disadvantaged pupils are reducing.

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

Leaders at St John's Primary aspire for pupils to 'Live life to its fullest'. They set high expectations for pupils' learning, behaviour and personal development. For the most part, pupils rise to these high aspirations. Behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They say that one of the best things about their school is that 'everyone is kind'. Warm, positive relationships help staff get to know pupils quickly, which matters because many pupils join or leave at different points in their education. Bullying is extremely rare and staff deal with it effectively.

Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils achieve well. This work is showing positive results, although some pupils have gaps in important knowledge about writing. Pupils enjoy learning

and want to do well. Spoken language is a key priority so that pupils develop vocabulary to help them to learn well.

Pupils understand the school's 'STAR' values. These are celebrated regularly and pupils confidently explain the importance of 'safe', 'team', 'achieve', 'respect' and 'smile.' As a result, pupils feel safe and develop a strong sense of belonging, however long they attend the school for. Parents and carers agree. One comment summed up the views of many when they stated, 'Staff know their pupils well and create a very nurturing environment. They also do their best to get to know and support families.'

Leaders broaden pupils' experiences and raise their aspirations. They want pupils to understand opportunities beyond the local area. Pupils learn about a wide range of careers through links with a local university and visits from professionals such as firefighters, bankers and pyrotechnicians. Pupils think about the knowledge and skills they need to pursue their ambitions.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the teaching of important knowledge and skills in writing enables pupils who have gaps in their writing knowledge to improve the quality of their writing.
 - Leaders should continue to strengthen support for teachers to ensure that adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are consistently matched to their needs, so that pupils learn well across all subjects.
 - Leaders should further ensure that subject leaders support staff to deliver the curriculum effectively so that all pupils achieve well in every subject.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Laraine 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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Lichfield. Its most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in March 2020.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Susan Bowyer

Lead inspector:

Barry Yeardsley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Mark Gilbert, Ofsted Inspector

Nina Sangha, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

292

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

354

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)

28.57%

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

1.71%

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

10.62%

Below 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	42%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	48%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	39%	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	65%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	72%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	73%	Below

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	50%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	48%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	46%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	54%	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	57%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	61%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	48%	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	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	35%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	25%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	65%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	62%	Above
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	40%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	35%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	44%	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 (revised)	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	33%	68%	-35 pp
2024/25 (revised)	35%	69%	-34 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	67%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	66%	-33 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	65%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	75%	80%	-5 pp
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	40%	78%	-38 pp
2024/25 (revised)	35%	78%	-43 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	78%	-40 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	77%	-33 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%	-36 pp
2024/25 (revised)	53%	81%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.2%	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)	17.5%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	16.0%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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