

St Finian's Catholic Primary School

Address: The Ridge, Cold Ash, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 9HU

Unique reference number (URN): 110037

Inspection report: 19 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective. This is because, leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and all children have equal access to the same broad and rich curriculum with a range of adaptations as needed.

Staff identify barriers to learning quickly and implement well-matched support that enables pupils to thrive. Early identification is a priority. Staff know pupils very well and respond rapidly to their needs. Adaptations are thoughtfully designed and consistently implemented, resulting in pupils making clear progress from their starting points.

A range of high-quality interventions are deliberately chosen and delivered with timely precision to support learners and their families. This ensures pupils can keep up with their peers and achieve well. Pupils are taught careful strategies to help them with their emotional regulation, should they be needed.

Staff training is well considered and highly valued. Staff work well with the pupils to support their learning and care needs. Leaders monitor the support that is available and adapt provision as required.

The pupil premium strategy carefully measures the impact of support and aligns closely with the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders work alongside external agencies to help pupils thrive.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established a well thought out and carefully crafted personal development programme. As a result, pupils' social, moral, spiritual and character education is first rate. Through the curriculum staff truly prepare the pupils for life in modern Britain. For example, well-planned trips to other places of worship or the cultural Mardi Gras day enable pupils to gain a wider knowledge of life beyond their school community. The relationships and sex education programme enables pupils to have a clear understanding of relevant knowledge at an age-appropriate level.

Pupils demonstrate a deep knowledge of the subjects they are taught, such as how to keep safe online or what a healthy diet looks like. They can apply this knowledge to a range of situations. Pupils understand tolerance and appreciate difference. In addition, pupils are taught to stay safe in a variety of contexts. For example, leaders have considered safety in the local area such as the nearby railway. Staff ensure pupils know how they can keep themselves and others safe.

Pupils' talents and interests are nurtured very well. They develop through an extensive range of clubs that are available and the wider curriculum opportunities. Pupils are very appreciative of this offer. Wider opportunities to represent the school are fully inclusive with activities such as running an alternative Olympics for local schools. Leaders carefully track the participation and target disadvantaged pupils, so all can take part. The school's pastoral

work meets the pupils needs effectively in a variety of ways. For example, the 'Wake up Wednesday' club is highly valued by pupils and parents.

Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to be leaders in the school and to help the school community. Older pupils carefully guide and support the younger children in their learning or at lunchtime. They feel they have a voice in the school and understand the democratic process of electing each other for these responsibilities.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically achieve well and broadly in line with national expectations. They make secure progress through the curriculum and learn the skills in reading and mathematics to be successful. Leaders have taken action to strengthen the teaching of phonics. A new phonics scheme has been introduced which is having a positive impact on pupils learning to read. Leaders are also working to strengthen the teaching of writing further. Leaders ensure all pupils including those who face a range of barriers to their learning achieve broadly in line with their peers. Pupils are ready for their next stage of education.

Pupils recall of the wider curriculum is impressive. They can remember key dates and information and can make links between subjects they have been learning. For example, when discussing the work of Picasso in art or life in Ancient Egypt and the importance of the River Nile.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders promote the importance of pupils attending school regularly. Consequently, pupils' attendance, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above national averages. Leaders effectively identify and resolve any barriers to learning before they become an issue for pupils or their families. This includes ensuring that any pupils who have any additional specialist provision are supported well. Pupils who need a more bespoke start to their school day are given the support they need to attend.

Pupils typically behave well. They have positive attitudes towards their learning. The majority of pupils focus well in lessons and contribute to the learning in class. The school's behaviour curriculum teaches pupils respectful behaviours and attitudes that are modelled by leaders and staff daily. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms and corridors is usually calm and purposeful. Pupils have a secure understanding of what constitutes bullying. They say bullying is rare. Any incidents of derogatory language or unkindness are not tolerated and are dealt with effectively. The school provides carefully planned support for those pupils who need help to manage their emotions or behaviour. This is enhanced further by well-trained staff who work with pupils so they can recognise different emotions in themselves. Pupils enjoy helping and supporting each other.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured there is a broad curriculum in place. It is well sequenced and maps skills, knowledge and vocabulary thoroughly. Leaders have a clear understanding of the quality of both the curriculum and teaching. They use this to strengthen and further refine the learning that pupils receive.

Pupils typically learn to read well. The new phonics programme is taught with accuracy by well trained staff. Typically, pupils secure the necessary foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Work should continue to strengthen the transcription skills that pupils need to be able to write clearly and with accuracy across the curriculum, however.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge to teach the curriculum well. Staff expertise is strengthened through a range of training and professional networks available to them. Staff training is carefully focused on evidenced informed pedagogy and the needs of the school.

Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate adaptations as needed. Teachers and leaders use assessment to identify gaps and to support pupils who may be at risk of falling behind. Staff typically use their checks to ensure adjustments to task design are made to enable pupils to be successful, however, leaders are working to strengthen this area of their work further.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for children which supports their development in the early years well. The outdoor and indoor areas are used effectively to provide opportunities to develop knowledge and skills needed to ensure they are ready for their next stage of learning.

Adults within the setting work well to support children's spoken language and oracy. There is a focus on developing the early foundational knowledge and skills needed to move onto key stage 1. Adults in the setting have developed a love of reading and books amongst the children. For example, children vote for their favourite story each morning and the winner is read to the class. Reading interventions are used to ensure that children who are at risk of falling behind are able to keep up with their peers. Children with additional needs are supported well. Typically, children achieve in line with national expectations.

Children know routines well. They are familiar with the structure of the day and follow it independently. The children are well-known to adults. Warm and caring relationships are seen in abundance. Care practices ensure that individual needs are met.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors foster a sense of community and shared values within the school. Inclusion is a distinct strength at St Finian's. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's context and areas that need to improve further. They also celebrate many of the strengths of the school such as the wide sporting offer and pupil leadership opportunities. All decisions are made in the best interest of pupils. Where required, leaders engage

proactively with other professionals and specialists when planning improvements. This work not only supports pupils but also staff development as well. Leaders evaluate the impact of their work effectively. They ensure that they remain focused on the priorities that will have a highly positive impact on pupils' education and wider school experiences.

Leaders ensure that all staff access a purposeful and high-quality programme for professional learning. This is evidence-informed to ensure that any training or changes to practice is given the time to become secure. The school's recent focus on teaching strategies is helping to strengthen classroom practice.

Governors understand their roles and statutory responsibilities well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. Governors understand the school context well and know the strengths and improvement priorities clearly. Typically, parents are positive about the school and leaders offer a range of community events to bring families together.

Staff are well supported by leaders who look after their workload and wellbeing. Leaders take into account staff wellbeing and workload in practical and supportive ways.

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

Pupils arrive happily each morning excited for the day ahead. They are very proud of their school. Pupils know it is a safe place where staff care about them, listen to their views and support their wellbeing. Relationships are warm and nurturing between pupils and staff. Pupils live by the school values of 'respectful, responsible and ready' and through the catholic social teaching, understand life in modern Britain and the wider world.

Pupils typically behave well in lessons. They listen well and actively take part in discussions and interactions with their teachers and peers. Pupils say any unkindness or bullying rarely happens. They know it will be dealt with if it were to occur. Pupils also feel empowered to sort friendship fall outs themselves as well as asking adults for help if they need it. Leadership opportunities such as bistro buddies or play leaders allow older pupils to support their younger peers well.

Pupil attendance is high. They have positive attitudes to school and are keen to experience all that the school offers. Pupils enjoy learning and appreciate the wide range of enrichment activities made available, especially the vast array of sporting experiences that are well planned.

Typically, in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, pupils achieve well and in line with national expectations. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who are disadvantaged. Staff provide effective support that helps to reduce pupils' barriers to learning or to accessing other aspects of school life. Everyone is included at St Finian's.

Leadership roles, such as eco-councillors, 'mini-Vinnies' and reading ambassadors, develop pupils' character. Pupils become resilient, independent and responsible by the time they leave the school. They are well prepared for their next stages of education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their high ambition for the curriculum and teaching is consistently embedded and that the task design of activities enables pupils to deepen their learning over time.
 - Leaders should continue to embed strategies for developing writing skills so that they can continue to improve pupils' achievement.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Phil Roberts.

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.

The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.

The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Portsmouth. Its last section 48 inspection was in February 2023.

The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Anna Jarratt

Lead inspector:

Simon Woodbridge, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Fiona Henderson, Ofsted Inspector

Richard Thomas, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

206

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

218

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)

3.40%

Well 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

4.37%

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

13.59%

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

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	41%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	54%	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	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	86%	73%	Above

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	65%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	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	75%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	86%	73%	Above

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 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘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 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

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

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	3.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.1%	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 (3 term)	2.2%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

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

Strong standard

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

Expected standard

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

Needs attention

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

Urgent improvement

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

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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