

St Paul's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Address: Buckstone Crescent, Alwoodley, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS17 5ES

Unique reference number (URN): 147485

Inspection report: 3 March 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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils' work across subjects is of high quality. They retain and recall knowledge well. Through revisiting earlier learning and undertaking quizzes, pupils can explain how their skills and knowledge develop over time. They reflect thoughtfully on their learning, for example pupils give deep insights into the Second World War.

Pupils achieve well. Their attainment in national tests is above national averages for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment is higher than that of other disadvantaged pupils nationally and continues to improve. Individual support helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils make rapid progress across the curriculum and leave the school as confident, capable young people who are ready for secondary school both academically and socially.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders are very successful in promoting the importance of high attendance to pupils and their families. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel part of the community and attend regularly. Attendance is a notable strength and is well above national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils are persistently absent. When this happens, leaders take swift and effective action to address it.

Behaviour is also a significant strength. Pupils are respectful and classrooms are busy, purposeful places where pupils and staff work happily together. The behaviour policy and golden rules are very well thought through and consistently applied. Pupils know these rules, which helps them to be respectful and reflective. Staff have high expectations of pupils. Sanctions are rarely needed and a simple reminder of the golden rules is enough to keep pupils focused on their learning. Unkind words are rare and staff help pupils resolve friendship issues when needed. Pupils usually manage their emotions well and resolve conflict independently. They accept difference, and discrimination is not present. Pupils who struggle to follow expectations receive the support they need.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders have created a rich and relevant curriculum built around high-quality texts that capture pupils' imaginations. Leaders think carefully about the vocabulary which pupils need to learn, building complexity over time and across subjects. Teachers identify the key knowledge that pupils need to know and make this clear for pupils. This helps them to understand where they are in their learning. This knowledge is sequenced well so that pupils understand what they should know and what they are learning next.

Leaders understand what is working well and where further focus is needed. Work to strengthen writing is having a positive impact. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and

lessons are purposeful and effective. Leaders use a range of activities to check how much pupils learn. For example, they use start- and end-point checks to identify what pupils know at the beginning of a topic and how much they have understood at the end.

Leaders focus on building pupils' basic knowledge to prepare them very well for future learning. Phonics, reading and mathematics are taught well. Teachers understand pupils' needs and adjust lessons when required, including for disadvantaged pupils. The extra help pupils receive means they catch up quickly and feel confident in their learning.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have a deep and accurate knowledge of the school. They lead with integrity and humility. Everything they do is for the benefit of pupils. The leadership team is well established, knows the community well and has highly effective working relationships with parents and carers.

Leaders have shaped St Paul's as a nurturing, caring and safe school. They continually seek to develop the school and have high expectations. Leaders reflect and identify any areas that can further improve and act accordingly. As a result, the school offers high-quality education.

Everyone is included. Leaders understand the needs of pupils who may be vulnerable, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They ensure these pupils are supported well. Leaders have established highly effective pastoral care that supports all pupils effectively.

Those responsible for governance know the school in detail and undertake their duties effectively. Members of the academy council understand the school's priorities. They are well supported by trustees who work with leaders and hold them to account. Leaders benefit from the expertise of the central team, helping them to refine their work and maintain high standards across the school.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They appreciate leaders' consideration of workload and wellbeing. They appreciate the well-planned professional learning linked to school priorities and tailored to staff needs.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school provides an ambitious and comprehensive programme for pupils' personal development, rooted in its values. Pupils leave St Paul's as respectful, tolerant, thoughtful and generous individuals. They move on to secondary school as mature young people. The 'once St Paul's, always St Paul's' ethos reflects the lasting skills pupils gain and take into their future lives.

The enrichment offer is purposeful and inclusive. Each class has one curriculum-linked enhancement per term, such as expert visitors or relevant trips. Examples include visits to the Houses of Parliament, superhero day and residential visits in Years 5 and 6. Leaders ensure all pupils, including those who may be disadvantaged, can take part.

Pupils also develop leadership skills through roles such as being a member of the school council, faith leaders and the eco-council. The school ensures that pupils have a voice beyond St Paul's, taking part in projects such as 'What you would tell world leaders' and 'Powering the planet'. Clubs and extra-curricular activities are plentiful, including sports clubs, the pupil-run basketball club, performances and opportunities to learn to play instruments. Disney day, the teddy bear hospital and growing trees in the polytunnel also further enhance pupils' experiences.

Pupils celebrate difference and understand the values needed for life in modern Britain. The personal development programme is well structured. It begins in Reception, where children learn to be kind to each other. Pupils learn how to stay safe both online and offline. They learn about healthy relationships in age-appropriate ways. Pupils live out the school's motto of 'Journeying together in faith, hope and love'.

Expected standard

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of the quality of education in early years. More children now arrive with greater levels of need and leaders have adapted the curriculum and teaching so all children feel they belong and can succeed.

Teaching is purposeful and engaging. Staff model language well and think carefully about the vocabulary they use when speaking with children. They help children develop speaking and listening skills effectively. Staff prioritise the approach of 'intervening, not interfering,' judging carefully when to join children's play to enhance learning.

The curriculum is ambitious and well sequenced. There is a clear focus on developing children's vocabulary. Daily teaching of early number helps children steadily build secure foundations. Phonics teaching is effective and adults support children who need extra help to keep up. Staff check understanding carefully so they can address errors early and ensure all children can move on securely.

Effective partnerships with parents and carers help staff understand children's individual needs. Most children leave Reception ready for Year 1. Staff ensure that Year 1 teachers are well informed about any specific needs to support transition.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils at St Paul's are known as individuals. Teachers understand pupils' needs well and close partnerships with parents and carers support this. The school's systems to identify and support individual needs help disadvantaged pupils make progress. Pastoral support is also effective.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Information from transition meetings and ongoing monitoring helps leaders understand how best to support pupils. They also use advice from specialists, such as hearing-impairment

services and educational psychologists, to tailor the support. Leaders understand the barriers some pupils may face, although academic targets for these pupils are not always precise enough.

In classrooms, teachers make adaptations for pupils with SEND that are generally effective. Staff benefit from training that helps them shape lessons so learning is accessible when needed.

Leaders use additional funding, including the pupil premium grant to support disadvantaged pupils, wisely. They keep a close eye on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and check carefully the impact of extra support. Other vulnerable pupils also receive appropriate academic and pastoral help that supports them to engage fully in their learning.

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

St Paul's is a happy, nurturing and safe school. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's context and priorities and they lead with care, integrity and humility. Everything staff do is for the benefit of pupils.

Pupils show kindness and respect. They try their best at all times and demonstrate polite manners. They reflect when they make mistakes. The golden rules underpin the positive behaviour of pupils across the school. Unkind words are rare and dealt with swiftly by staff when they occur. Pupils' attendance is above national averages and very few pupils are persistently absent because pupils enjoy school and feel they belong. These positive habits begin as soon as pupils join the school in Reception, where children clearly enjoy coming to school.

Teachers understand individual pupils' needs, interests and potential. Staff expertise and teamwork ensure pupils receive the help they need, including those who need extra support to overcome any difficulties. Lessons are purposeful and engaging. Teachers explain concepts clearly and help pupils build on what they already know. Teachers check understanding and question pupils effectively. In Reception, children have a range of opportunities to develop intellectually, socially and physically. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well and enjoy learning.

Pupils leave St Paul's ready for the next stage of their education. They are well-rounded, confident, articulate and sociable. They benefit from planned enrichments each term, such as visits to the Houses of Parliament, superhero day and theatre trips. Clubs are plentiful, including gardening in the polytunnel, which is enjoyed by many. Partnerships with parents and carers are especially positive, ensuring that families are fully engaged in supporting their children's education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that individual targets for disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are precise so that teachers can

- evaluate the impact of support and respond promptly to any emerging needs.
 - Leaders should build on recent early years improvements to ensure a greater proportion of pupils leave Reception well prepared for Year 1.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Gregory the Great Catholic 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, Peter Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Shaun Vickers.

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 senior leaders, the chief executive officer, members of the central team, a colleague from the diocese and those responsible for governance during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school last received a section 48 inspection in January 2026.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Phil Bowker: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Michael Wardle, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

David Horrigan, Ofsted Inspector

Jenni Machin, 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 March 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

210

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)

11.65%

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

0.49%

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

15.53%

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	72%	61%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	74%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	68%	60%	Above

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	84%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	84%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	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	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	84%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	84%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	87%	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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	76%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	83%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	58%	Above

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	71%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	67%	-1 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 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	76%	80%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	83%	80%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	78%	-3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	78%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	78%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	77%	-2 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	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	75%	79%	-4 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)	3.8%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.2%	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)	6.5%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	2.7%	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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