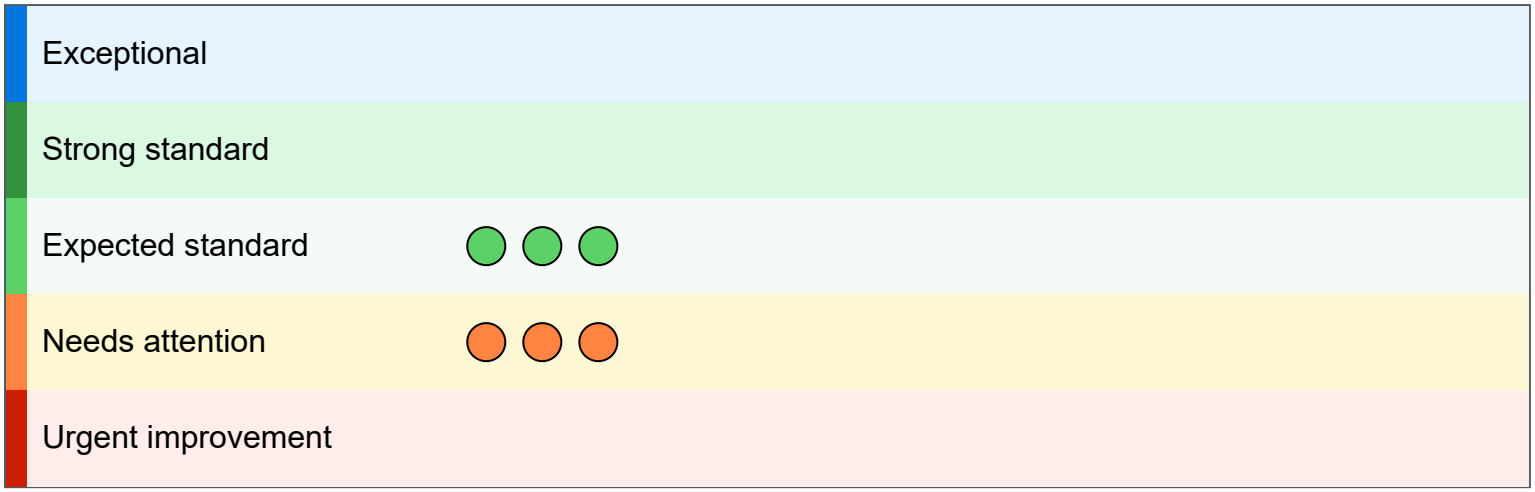
St Paul's Catholic Junior School

Address: Spring Grove, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L12 8SJ

Unique reference number (URN): 104661

Inspection report: 17 March 2026



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

Pupils typically attend school regularly. Overall, attendance rates sit in line with the national average. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of attendance patterns. Staff work closely with pupils, families and external agencies to tackle the barriers that prevent regular attendance. Staff offer a range of support when pupils are absent, such as home visits and tailored support. These approaches have a positive impact. Persistent absence has reduced over time. This reflects the impact of these systems.

Behaviour across the school is generally calm and orderly. Leaders have established clear routines. Pupils report that relationships with staff are positive. Staff know them well and provide consistent care and support. Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning and concentrate well. Pupils appreciate that their positive behaviour is noticed and rewarded. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are confident to speak to staff if they have worries. Staff apply the school's behaviour policy with consistency. Leaders provide training to strengthen practice where needed. Incidents of discriminatory, unkind or unsafe behaviour are rare. When they do occur, leaders act quickly and appropriately.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Inclusion is a visible priority across the school. Leaders identify and meet pupils' diverse needs. Staff know pupils' needs well and use this understanding to recognise barriers to learning early. Leaders assess pupils' needs carefully and use this information to shape relevant support for pupils. 'Hub' classes provide structured, tailored programmes for pupils with varying needs. This includes targeted work towards education, health and care plan aims. Many pupils who previously struggled to learn in class now do so regularly and successfully. They are gradually reintegrated into mainstream learning and helped to sustain positive relationships with their classmates.

The school reduces barriers to pupils' learning through thoughtful adaptations to teaching and resources. For example, staff modify the classroom set up and routines where necessary and use resources to help pupils focus. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely. They review the impact of interventions to ensure that support remains effective. Staff receive ongoing training that enables them to routinely respond to pupils' needs. Leaders work well with families and external professionals. This ensures that support for pupils is as appropriate as possible and takes into account pupils' aspirations. Additional funding is used increasingly effectively to support pupils. Nevertheless, some pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do not achieve as well as they could. When leaders organise alternative provision placements for pupils, leaders check its quality and suitability carefully.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Pupils' personal development is a notable feature of the school. It is reflected in the way pupils speak about their values, actions and responsibilities. Staff successfully encourage pupils to reflect on their beliefs, understand ethical dilemmas and to recognise right and

wrong. In assemblies and class discussions, pupils explain why kindness, respect and resilience are important. They draw on real scenarios from their own experiences. Pupils articulate why it is important to help others. Many reference the school's fundraising for a local hospice as an example of 'living out' these values.

Pupils' social development is encouraged through structured roles that build their personal responsibility and cooperation with their peers. Pupils serve as house captains, class councillors, 'mini vinnies' and as heads of school. Through these roles, they organise charity projects and support younger pupils. Pupils proudly receive awards for showing resilience or kindness. This shows the school's values in practice. The school organises special events that deepen pupils' understanding of diversity, grief and community responsibility.

Leaders, staff and pupils are very proud of pupils' sporting achievements. This helps to foster a sense of ambition in the school. Furthermore, leaders use former pupils as role models to help pupils to think about their future career aspirations.

The personal development programme is well designed and meets pupils' needs. It builds pupils' knowledge of key ideas steadily over time. As a result, pupils speak with confidence about topics such as emotions, friendships and how to keep themselves safe. The programme provides additional layers of support for disadvantaged pupils. This includes targeted support from local agencies and opportunities to participate fully in enrichment.

Staff offer a broad range of clubs. These include football, drama, boys' philosophy and girls' rights clubs. These opportunities extend pupils' cultural, creative and social experiences.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Overall, pupils' achievement and progress across key subjects such as English and mathematics are low. Leaders have not made the enduring improvements needed so that pupils achieve in line with their peers nationally. This is reflected in the school's published outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6. The quality, handwriting and accuracy of pupils' English work varies widely. Some pupils struggle to draft, edit and improve their work. Together, weaknesses in pupils' achievement in these subjects mean that they are not as well prepared as they should be for their next stage in education.

Pupils demonstrate secure knowledge of early reading. This enables them to read accurately and build confidence as readers. Where teaching is stronger, pupils make more secure progress. For example, in subjects such as history and music, pupils' knowledge and understanding build successfully over time. Pupils share their learning confidently and make connections between subjects.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

In most subjects, the curriculum is broad and coherent. Leaders have ensured that it prioritises the most important learning. However, weaknesses in oversight mean that the

curriculum is not implemented consistently well across the school. Leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching with sufficient precision. This prevents them from taking decisive action to improve teaching where necessary. As a result, pupils' learning, particularly in writing and mathematics, remains uneven. Many pupils struggle to recall number facts, apply spelling patterns and write fluently. Nevertheless, the teaching of early reading is secure. As is the teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics, such as design and technology.

Leaders' work to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge is in development but not fully embedded. Teaching does not clearly show the thinking and steps that pupils need to carry out before they attempt work independently. Teachers do not routinely check that pupils remember and understand what they have been taught. As a result, teachers do not use knowledge of gaps in pupils' learning to inform future teaching. Sessions that are designed to close gaps in pupils' early reading knowledge unintentionally widen gaps elsewhere as they reduce pupils' time in English lessons.

Leaders know pupils' learning needs well, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff make adjustments if necessary. However, adaptations are not frequently well-aligned with curriculum goals. Leaders have begun to refine support for pupils, including catch up in early literacy and mathematics, but it is too soon to see the impact of these strategies.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders understand the school's strengths and have identified appropriate priorities for improvement. For example, they know the school should strengthen the quality of teaching to secure higher achievement in English and mathematics. However, their actions to improve the quality of teaching have not been implemented as rapidly as they should be. In addition, the school has not sufficiently evaluated the impact and effectiveness of its decisions.

Governors have improved their oversight of the curriculum since the previous inspection. They provide support and some challenge. However, their scrutiny of pupils' outcomes, especially in English and mathematics, lacks rigour. As a result, they have not ensured that leaders' actions have resulted in improvements.

Leaders make decisions with pupils' best interests in mind. They show clear commitment to improve the lives of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care. Staff access a coherent and evidence-informed professional learning programme. Leaders have begun to strengthen subject-specific training to build expertise more effectively. Staff report that leaders consider their workload and wellbeing when they make decisions. They are respected and supported. This positive culture helps staff to remain committed to improving the school.

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

Pupils at St Paul’s feel loved, valued and included in day-to-day school life. Staff know pupils well and promote an ethos rooted in the school’s values. They encourage kindness, respect and forgiveness. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and trusting. This helps to ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Pupils are encouraged to be confident and caring individuals.

Over time, many pupils have not been well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to address weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum. There are inconsistencies in teaching and how effectively teachers check what pupils know and understand. This means that pupils often experience variation in the quality of their learning from day to day. Pupils’ academic progress through the curriculum and attainment across subjects is typically low.

Despite these weaknesses, pupils benefit from a warm, caring community. Staff have high expectations of pupils’ behaviour and for the most part, pupils meet these expectations. Pupils who require additional support to engage positively in their learning receive timely help. They enjoy their learning and take it seriously. Generally, they engage well in lessons and support one another effectively. Pupils report that if bullying happens, they know that staff will help to sort it out. They are proud of their ‘be a buddy, not a bully’ campaign.

The school offers a range of broad and enriching experiences beyond lessons. Faith-based events, sports, leadership roles and community activities help pupils to learn to be responsible. Leaders provide chances for pupils to grow their confidence and to be leaders. Pupils engage positively with school life. Through the curriculum and wider activities, pupils learn about the importance of equality and to respect diversity. They understand what it means to be an active member of the school, as well as local and national communities.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve teaching of foundational knowledge, including in transcription and mathematical fluency, so that pupils across all year groups are supported to learn the knowledge and skills they need to build their fluency and accuracy over time.
- Leaders should ensure that highly effective teaching, including using assessment information securely to address gaps in pupils' knowledge, is embedded across the school so that all pupils are ready for the next stage in their education.
- Those responsible for governance should improve their strategic oversight and scrutiny of the school's work and support leaders to deliver precise and timely action that leads to the necessary improvements.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Marc Evans.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with members of the governing board, as well as representatives of the local authority and archdiocese. Inspectors spoke with several pupils, staff, parents and carers.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2022.

The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher : Jamie Luck

Lead inspector:
Helen Friend, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Gary Bevin, Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Ridsdale, Ofsted Inspector
Sue Mills, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

500
Well above 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

480
Well above 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)

22.80%
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

3.20%
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

16.80%
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

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	48%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	46%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	46%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	67%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	70%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	68%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	69%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	55%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	55%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	32%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	29%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	28%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	59%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	59%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	55%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	44%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	66%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	58%	Close to average

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	39%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	38%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	32%	68%	-36 pp
2024/25 (revised)	29%	69%	-40 pp
2023/24 (final)	28%	67%	-39 pp
2022/23 (final)	41%	66%	-25 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	59%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (revised)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	78%	-15 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	55%	78%	-23 pp
2024/25 (revised)	44%	78%	-34 pp
2023/24 (final)	66%	78%	-12 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	55%	77%	-23 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	39%	80%	-41 pp
2024/25 (revised)	38%	81%	-42 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	79%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	41%	79%	-38 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)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.7%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	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)	11.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	14.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	15.9%	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.

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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