

St Pius X Catholic Primary School, Barrow

Address: Schneider Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 4AA

Unique reference number (URN): 149498

Inspection report: 21 April 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 ●

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders place pupils' personal development and wellbeing at the heart of their work. They have designed a highly ambitious programme that teaches pupils to be healthy and safe in an age-appropriate way. Learning is carefully adapted so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access lessons. This includes online safety and healthy relationships. Pupils are confident and are enthused by the positive difference that they can make to their community and beyond. When needed, leaders add activities to respond to concerns in the community, such as vaping and water safety.

Leaders expect pupils to treat each other with kindness. Pupils do this well. They openly welcome new arrivals from different countries. They show respect to each other, valuing their differences due to religion, customs or beliefs. Pupils understand that everyone is unique and should be treated equally. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, and they enact these within school, showing tolerance for all and voting on school issues. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils enjoy the wide and varied opportunities that the school offers. Children in early years regularly explore the local areas through 'Monday miles'. Pupils visit museums and enjoy an annual theatre visit. Pupils are aspirational for their future. They know that their teachers want them to succeed. Opportunities to attend a careers event at the local secondary school inspire pupils to think about their future role in society.

Highly trained staff, who know families well, lead pastoral support effectively. They adapt support to meet the needs of pupils. Links with specialists have helped some pupils to manage well in school.

Expected standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Pupils attend school regularly. When parents and carers struggle to get their children to school, leaders do all they can to help. This includes providing transport in the school minibuses. This has led to improved attendance for some vulnerable pupils. Pupils benefit from highly effective pastoral support. This has helped to reduce anxiety about attending school. The 'pastoral pod' provides a safe and nurturing place for pupils to build up their resilience before joining learning activities in class. Some pupils with medical needs have barriers to attendance. Leaders continue to support these pupils well.

Most pupils behave well. They focus on their learning because they find lessons interesting and want to achieve well. Pupils enjoy playtimes. They respect and care for each other. Older pupils are great role models for children in the early years. They thoroughly enjoy being 'play pals'. When pupils struggle to follow the school rules, they are given the help that they need to recognise how their behaviour impacts others. When bullying occurs, leaders deal with it quickly and appropriately. Leaders use suspensions appropriately. Recent

changes to the behaviour systems are used consistently by staff. Pupils value the rewards that they receive for exhibiting positive behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have successfully resolved the weaknesses in the previous curriculum offer. The refreshed curriculum is ambitious, interesting and relevant. This is enabling most pupils, especially younger pupils, to build their knowledge effectively. Most pupils enjoy learning and are proud of their work.

Staff have the knowledge and skills that they need to teach with confidence. This is because they work closely with experts, in particular for English and mathematics. This ensures that the key skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught well. Leaders know what is working well in the delivery of the curriculum and what areas require further attention. Generally, they take appropriate actions, such as improving pupils' writing content and handwriting. As a result, most pupils now present their work well.

Staff assess learning accurately at the end of topics. However, some staff do not pick up on the mistakes that some pupils make. In addition, staff do not identify the gaps that some older pupils have in their learning. Staff adjust activities to help pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to learn more.

Leaders are aware that some pupils who did not benefit from the renewed curriculum continue to have gaps in their knowledge. They have developed systems to keep an eye on pupils' progress over time.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for children in early years. They have designed a clear curriculum, which enables 2-year-olds and children in the Nursery and Reception classes to learn all that they should. Staff are well trained to deliver the early years curriculum. They design activities that help children to gain key skills in early reading, writing and mathematics, as well as find out about the wider world. Phonics is taught well and ensures that children learn the sounds that letters make. Staff interact well with children. They focus on communication skills and, through their talk, help to build children's vocabulary. Typically, most children progress well through this curriculum and are ready for their move into Year 1.

Staff are nurturing and caring. The positive relationships that they forge with children mean that they feel secure, safe and happy in the early years. Two-year-old children settle quickly. They play well with each other in a calm and interesting environment. Well-established routines ensure that children become increasingly independent and learn how to follow the school's rules. They learn to take turns and listen to the views and ideas of others. Children behave well.

Productive relationships with parents and carers mean that staff are aware of the barriers that might hinder some children from thriving. Staff adjust their teaching well to help children access learning and develop emotionally and socially.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders quickly check if pupils need extra help or support when they join the school. They are aware of those pupils who face additional challenges that make it more difficult for them to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Leaders ensure that these pupils receive the help that they need to overcome the barriers that prevent them from succeeding.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities quickly and accurately. They provide individualised support for pupils when needed. Generally, this support helps pupils to make progress through the curriculum. Pupils benefit from specialist support and guidance, for instance, in early communication and learning skills.

Teachers are suitably trained so that they are equipped to adapt learning activities so that everyone can join in. They provide pupils with extra support or equipment if needed. This helps pupils to focus on their work in class. Leaders use funding well to make sure that disadvantaged pupils are given the opportunity to be involved in all activities and to succeed. For instance, some pupils attend small-group work before school.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including governors, accurately understand the needs of the school and the community that it serves. They have created a place where everyone feels proud to be part of the school community. Those responsible for governance are well trained and have the skills to provide support and challenge to leaders. They carry out statutory duties effectively and ensure that resources, including additional funding, are used well to help pupils to make progress through the curriculum. This includes pupils who face disadvantage or other barriers to learning. Trustees ensure that they meet their statutory duties.

Leaders accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have taken positive action to improve the curriculum so that pupils gain the foundations for future success. However, at times, leaders do not check how well their changes are helping older pupils to catch up.

Leaders check staff's workload and wellbeing. They organise professional development so that all staff are well trained to do their job. This includes supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and value the support and opportunities that leaders give to all of the pupils, in particular vulnerable pupils. Leaders work closely with other schools and the local community. They organise local events such as 'Pius Calling', so that pupils can share their talents. They also raise additional funds that are used to provide pupils with extra resources, such as exciting play equipment.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils do not consistently attain as well as other pupils nationally in the end of Year 6 tests and assessment. Consequently, some pupils do not leave Year 6 ready for the next stage of their education. This is because these pupils did not benefit from the recent improvements to the curriculum. Some older pupils have gaps in their learning, which make it difficult for them to gain a secure body of knowledge. Errors or misconceptions in their understanding are not remedied quickly enough to help them make greater gains in their learning.

Younger pupils typically gain the basic skills that they need in reading, writing, mathematics and communication to help them access learning across all subjects. This is ensuring that those pupils who have experienced the refreshed curriculum for longer are making the progress that they should in learning key knowledge. This is also true for those pupils who join the school part-way through the school year. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well to their individual goals, while disadvantaged pupils attain as well as other disadvantaged pupils nationally. This is due to the additional support that they receive to reduce their barriers to learning.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They benefit from positive relationships with adults. This helps them to feel safe. Many pupils enjoy learning because they find the curriculum interesting. Pupils with barriers to learning have their needs identified quickly and they receive the support that they need to learn alongside their peers. Teachers have the training and knowledge that they need to teach well. Nevertheless, some pupils, especially older pupils, are not ready for the next steps in their education. This is because they have not benefited fully from leaders' recent changes to the curriculum. Some of these pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which hold them back from achieving as well as they should.

Typically, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, are included fully in activities that the school offers. Leaders ensure that additional funding is targeted for this to happen. For example, leaders make sure that pupils who face additional challenges receive extra help with their learning and participate in trips. Pupils appreciate learning outside the classroom, such as visits to museums and farms.

Most pupils respect each other and play well together. Many pupils excel in their various roles and responsibilities. Older pupils are positive role models for children in the early years. Pupils enjoy the many leadership opportunities on offer. For instance, they act as 'play pals', 'rota kids' and 'mini police'. Leaders organise many clubs, including radio club, gymnastics and choir. They make sure that all pupils can join in if they wish to. Pupils also take part in projects that inspire them, such as virtual reality experiences and working with a professional orchestra, as well as science and technology days at the local college.

Pupils generally behave well. They understand the rules and routines and respect the school's values. When bullying happens, leaders deal with it appropriately. Pupils attend school regularly.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the gaps in pupils' knowledge, especially older pupils, are reduced so that these pupils attain well by the end of Year 6 and are ready for the next stage of their education.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers address errors and misconceptions in pupils' work more effectively so that pupils build future learning on a secure body of knowledge.
 - Leaders should refine their checks on teaching so that they can measure the impact of their improvement work on pupils' achievement, especially in closing gaps for older pupils.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Mater Christi 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), Jacky Kennedy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Elizabeth Mallinson.

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 and other school leaders. They also spoke to representatives from the governing body, trustees and the CEO from the multi-academy trust, the local authority and the Diocese of Lancaster.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This is the first inspection since the school joined the multi-academy trust.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Lancaster. The school's previous section 48 inspection of schools with a religious character took place in February 2026.

The school makes use of one alternative provision.

Headteacher: Kevin McGoldrick

Lead inspector:

Kathryn Pym, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sarah Barraclough, Ofsted Inspector

Craig Dewar-Willox, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

216

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

246

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)

35.05%

Above 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

5.09%

Above 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

17.59%

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

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	54%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	48%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42%	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	67%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	56%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	73%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	58%	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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	23%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	54%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30%	44%	Below

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	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	31%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	85%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	53%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	46%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	62%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	64%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	54%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	60%	59%	Close to average

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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (revised)	23%	69%	-46 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	67%	-14 pp
2022/23 (final)	30%	66%	-36 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	61%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	31%	81%	-50 pp
2023/24 (final)	85%	80%	5 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	78%	-8 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	53%	78%	-25 pp
2024/25 (revised)	46%	78%	-32 pp
2023/24 (final)	62%	78%	-16 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 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	64%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (revised)	54%	81%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	77%	79%	-3 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	60%	79%	-19 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)	4.3%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	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)	9.6%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	17.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	19.3%	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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