

St Meryl School

Address: The Mead, Carpenders Park, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD19 5BT

Unique reference number (URN): 117166

Inspection report: 24 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

In national tests and assessments, pupils generally achieve in line with national expectations. This includes pupils who may be disadvantaged or have other barriers to their learning. Leaders make sure pupils who are disadvantaged achieve as well as their peers. They are prepared with the skills they need for the next stage of their education.

When some pupils do not achieve as well, the school makes swift changes to the curriculum, for example, the way phonics is taught. They focus on the quality of teaching and closely check the progress pupils make. Leaders acted quickly to improve how well early reading is taught.

The school has experienced a change in the needs of the pupils who attend. More pupils now attending speak English as an additional language. Most of these pupils achieve well over time. They receive effective support and need extra time in order to catch up.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders place a high priority on improving attendance and punctuality. Most pupils attend in line with national figures. Leaders track attendance data carefully. They act quickly when pupils, or specific groups, start to attend less. Leaders promote attendance through clear systems and expectations. When a pupil's attendance drops, staff work closely with families to help pupils return to regular routines as soon as possible. This mix of support and high expectations helps reduce persistent absence and improve attendance across the school.

Pupils generally behave well. Older pupils act responsibly and set a good example. Classes are calm, and pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. For example, they listen well to others. Younger children know the routines and learn how to take turns. Across the school, at playtime, pupils enjoy their free time and play well together. Generally, the school is calm and orderly, but there are times when pupils are highly enthused and become over-excitable in lessons.

When pupils need help to improve their behaviour, staff teach them the expectations. This helps pupils understand the impact of their actions. It also prevents further incidents. Staff check behaviour patterns often so they can step in early when pupils need extra support. Leaders make sure staff share the same expectations, which helps pupils feel secure.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a broad, interesting curriculum. The next steps for learning are carefully planned. This means that pupils build their knowledge in a clear sequence. They also revisit important ideas, which helps them to remember more. This helps to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Training for staff means they have the subject knowledge they need. They also know how to help pupils remember new ideas, for example, explaining new concepts in a child-friendly

way. Staff adapt the learning appropriately to support pupils when they need it. Staff design interesting activities to help pupils remember key information. For example, pupils learn about religious symbols by cooking hot cross buns. Pupils can recall their learning well. When pupils have gaps in their knowledge, such as not feeling confident about spelling words, staff teach them the skills they need. Pupils receive this support for as long as necessary. This helps them to keep up with their peers.

At times, some teaching is less precise about what teachers want pupils to know. New knowledge is not always explained clearly. When this happens, pupils cannot articulate what they are learning. This makes it harder for them to remember the new knowledge.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders make deliberate choices to ensure the curriculum matches the needs of the children. For example, physical development helps them to be ready to play safely and enjoy sports as they grow. Staff plan the physical environment with care so children can develop key skills, such as balancing and climbing. Children who are 3 years old also use these areas. They play together and learn from their older peers.

Learning to read has a high focus. Children learn to read through the school's chosen phonics curriculum. Many children quickly progress to read words with the skills they have developed. They build confidence as they progress. Alongside learning to read, children learn to write the letter shapes. This helps to develop their writing skills. Children learn the basics of number. All of this prepares them well for Year 1.

Staff communicate well with parents and carers about their children's development. Staff develop children's language and communication skills. For example, staff help children to use the right words as they engage in learning activities. This helps children to explain their ideas clearly. However, sometimes, staff do not develop language skills well enough, for example, by building language and vocabulary with children during informal playtimes.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders accurately identify when pupils have additional needs. They work with parents and carers to make sure everyone understands those needs and any barriers to learning. Leaders identify strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These help staff to understand each pupil so that they achieve their best. Staff review these strategies often to check they are effective. For example, a visual timetable helps pupils to understand what will happen next and to stay focused on their tasks.

Leaders plan relevant training for staff to develop their expertise in supporting pupils well. Staff know how to develop the key skills that pupils need. They identify when pupils have gaps in their understanding. Pupils receive specific teaching to strengthen that skill or close the gap. This means pupils who need it get the guidance they need. Additionally, this supports them to keep up with their peers.

Leaders work well with external agencies, such as a local special school. They seek advice early so pupils get the help they need. Staff use this advice in their daily work with pupils to provide the right support at the right time.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders make well-judged and swift decisions when any part of the school needs improvement, for example, the prompt action taken to improve the teaching of phonics in order to improve outcomes. Staff have embedded these changes quickly, making sure pupils receive the best start to their education. Across the school, staff feel that leaders take actions that impact positively on pupils' education. This helps staff feel confident about the work of the school and proud of the difference they make.

Staff access high quality training based on robust evidence and research. Over time, staff strengthen their skills and expertise. Leaders make sure that subjects are well taught so that pupils progress appropriately through the curriculum. Additionally, they make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who may be vulnerable or others who have other barriers to their learning have the right support in place so they can also achieve well.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties, such as making sure the school's recruitment processes safeguard pupils. They hold leaders to account for changes and improvements to ensure these are appropriate and impactful. Staff feel leaders are considerate of their wellbeing. Leaders do all they can to reduce staff workload. Parents are positive about the education their children receive. They also value the care that staff show their children every day.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders' programme for the personal development of pupils helps them to grow into responsible young people. Pupils learn to show compassion to others. For example, they know that bullying is not acceptable. They also know the harm racism causes. Pupils understand that some disabilities are visible and some are hidden. Pupils describe everyone as 'deserving of kindness', which they show in their daily actions. They comfort one another. They offer help without being asked.

Staff help pupils build social skills for different situations. Younger pupils learn how to take turns. Older pupils act as role models. They help children at playtimes. Staff show pupils how to manage disagreements. Pupils understand that both online and offline risks can affect their wellbeing. Leaders keep a close eye on new online threats. They update the curriculum to make sure pupils understand the risks. The relationships and health education curriculum is well considered. Staff teach pupils how to understand their feelings and how these may change as they grow older. Pupils remember key learning well and show thoughtful attitudes. Those pupils who need extra support receive timely pastoral help when they need it. This support helps them to thrive.

Leaders work with families to celebrate the school's diversity. Pupils proudly share their traditions. The school's inclusive approach helps pupils understand the importance of culture. Pupils understand the fundamental British values, for example tolerance and

respect. They explain how these values guide their actions. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils take part in many activities that encourage responsibility. They join community events and raise money for charities. The school also offers a wide range of creative and physical activities. Pupils enjoy working with musicians from 'Electric Umbrella' and producing artwork for a local exhibition. These opportunities broaden pupils' horizons.

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

Pupils are proud to come to this school. Most attend regularly. Pupils enjoy their learning. Staff skilfully help pupils to remember new ideas. They link new learning to real-life examples. This motivates pupils. They see why their learning matters and how it connects to the wider world. Pupils generally work hard and achieve well. This prepares them effectively for their next educational stage.

Pupils warmly welcome visitors. Additionally, they show kindness to one another. At breaktimes, they play together harmoniously. Pupils learn to respect each other. This helps them to feel safe and happy. In lessons, pupils listen well to each other and to staff. As a result, lessons are calm and purposeful. Bullying does not happen often. When it does, or when pupils fall out, staff act quickly and resolve issues fairly. Pupils with extra responsibilities, such as those in the school council, understand that they belong to a school community. They want to make it a better place. For example, they raise money to buy play equipment, which other pupils can enjoy. Older pupils act responsibly as positive role models for younger children. The youngest children in the Reception and Nursery classes understand the school rules and follow routines with confidence. This helps them to develop positive attitudes to their learning.

Staff and pupils have positive relationships. Pupils feel that teachers care about their wellbeing. Music plays a big part in this. For example, pupils sing together with great enthusiasm. This creates a strong sense of joy and togetherness. When pupils need extra support with their wellbeing, staff give this help straight away. As a result, pupils feel ready and able to learn well. Pupils celebrate the diversity within the school. They learn about different people's cultures and religions. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders need to ensure that teaching is consistently implemented across all subjects and year groups. They should make sure that new knowledge is explained clearly so that pupils securely understand their learning and remember it with confidence.
 - In the early years, leaders need to make sure that staff develop children's language skills with more precision. Staff should use every opportunity, including informal play, to strengthen children's vocabulary, so that children build their language skills well.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Olga Cara.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 221 pupils on roll.

Headteacher : Craig Davies

Lead inspector:

Jessie Linsley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jude Lovely, Ofsted Inspector

Karen Stanton, 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 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

227

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

240

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)

11.44%

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

2.64%

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

9.69%

Below 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	53%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	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	68%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
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	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
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	58%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
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	50%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
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	33%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	33%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
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	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (revised)	33%	69%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
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	58%	80%	-21 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
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	50%	78%	-28 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	33%	80%	-46 pp
2024/25 (revised)	33%	81%	-47 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
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 (2 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.5%	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)	11.0%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	11.6%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy

Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email:
psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright