

Swell Church of England Primary School

Address: Lower Swell, Cotswold, Cotswold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1LH

Unique reference number (URN): 149256

Inspection report: 13 January 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have worked tenaciously to bring about a positive change in attendance culture. Their strong relationships with families and clear communication about the importance of school and learning are helping pupils attend well. The school provides appropriate challenge and support when pupils' attendance falls short. Those responsible for governance provide robust challenge to leaders about attendance. Creative strategies, including working with other schools, help to remove barriers so that pupils feel an increased sense of belonging. Attendance data does not always reflect leaders' notable work because the number of pupils in each year group is small and many pupils join the school partway through the year. As a result of leaders' actions, the attendance of pupils who remain at the school over time has improved and is sustained.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The school's environment is rooted in mutual respect. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and show curiosity about new ideas. Pupils have a secure understanding of discrimination and why it is important to respect people's differences. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination or bullying, and any concerns are dealt with quickly and efficiently. Staff apply the school's behaviour approach consistently and skilfully, which helps pupils understand and meet expectations. They rarely need reminders about how to behave. Younger pupils benefit from well-established routines and develop independence from the moment they start school.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school's ethos is that every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will succeed. The school identifies pupils' needs with precision. Staff monitor pupils' learning closely and act quickly when they spot signs that additional support is needed. This includes pupils who join the school at different points in their education. The school responds promptly and appropriately. Staff receive targeted training so they can support pupils effectively. Pupils who require more specialised approaches benefit from guidance provided by external agencies and constructive work with families. Staff work together to create clear, specific targets that identify gaps in knowledge and set out how these will be addressed. These plans are reviewed regularly and inform wider aspects of the school's provision. As a result, pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points and often exceed their own expectations, for example in reading.

Leaders make effective use of research to shape provision for pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. For example, regular 'check-ins' help pupils understand and manage their emotions. The school also uses alternative provision appropriately to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support. The school's work on inclusion is embedded securely and is making a sustained difference for pupils who face barriers to their learning. Leaders ensure that no detail is overlooked, and pupils receive the support they need to be successful.

The personal development programme is expertly and coherently designed to meet the needs and aspirations of pupils at this school. Its principles are woven securely through the academic curriculum. Pupils learn to build resilience because they are encouraged to try new things, persevere when they find work difficult and learn from mistakes. Meaningful responsibilities, such as leading presentations, enable pupils to develop confidence and self-assurance. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are taught the essential knowledge and skills they need to prepare them well for life beyond school. The programme includes effective relationships, sex and health education. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks, including online risks, in a clear and age-appropriate way.

Pupils learn to manage themselves and their friendships successfully, including during social times. They play harmoniously and are supported to take appropriate, calculated risks in their learning and play. For example, pupils design and build vehicles from pallets, developing their physical skills, teamwork and problem-solving. Pupils value the way the school uses art and drawing to support their mental health and wellbeing. They learn about ethical issues from around the world and reflect maturely on these. Pupils deepen their understanding of right and wrong through discussions and creative activities. They have a well-developed understanding of fundamental British values and can relate these confidently to their own experiences. They also recognise how values are expressed across different beliefs. For example, during a visit to a Hindu temple, they showed respect by observing the appropriate customs of the religious setting, and later reflected on how they demonstrate respect in their daily lives.

Pupils speak positively about the wide range of experiences on offer to them, including learning musical instruments. Their appreciation of the arts is broadened through pantomimes and opera visits. Pupils learn to take responsibility and show initiative. For example, they raised money by making and selling hot chocolate to buy a sofa that enhances their social space.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils learn the curriculum well across subjects so that they are ready for their next stage. They talk confidently about what they know. For example, they can describe particle arrangements in solids, liquids and gases, and explain the significance of the Roman era on life today. Pupils learn specific vocabulary that supports their understanding. Children in early years, for instance, use words such as 'warmer' and 'cooler' when making 'animal soup'.

However, the school's published outcomes in national tests do not fully reflect the knowledge pupils are gaining. The number of pupils in each year group varies significantly each year, and many pupils join the school partway through their primary education, which has an impact on overall attainment. Multiplication scores, in particular, have been

influenced by this. The school's work on developing secure multiplication knowledge is helping pupils recall these facts readily and address gaps in learning. Generally, pupils secure the basic knowledge needed to access the curriculum. However, some pupils struggle to form letters correctly, which means they do not write as fluently or confidently as they should.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that builds on the knowledge pupils already know so they are ready for their next steps. Leaders check how well the curriculum is taught. Using this information, they make astute decisions to bring about improvements. They think carefully about staffing and resources so that pupils, no matter their age and stage, get the support they need.

The school accurately identifies the starting points of pupils who join the school mid year. They prioritise teaching pupils the basics of reading, writing and mathematics. Younger pupils learn to read as soon as they start school. Teachers adapt teaching to ensure that those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who face barriers to their learning are supported to learn the curriculum well.

Leaders ensure teachers have the right subject knowledge to be able to teach the curriculum. For example, staff have had recent training on how to use physical resources to enable pupils' understanding of new mathematical ideas. This helps pupils to secure a deeper understanding of challenging concepts.

Across subjects, staff effectively check how well pupils understand new learning and correct any misconceptions. In some cases, teachers do not correct misconceptions in written work, so some pupils make repeated errors.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including trust leaders, and those responsible for governance, put pupils at the centre of their decision making. As a result, many parents and carers choose to send their children to the school. Pupils who may have had challenging experiences prior to arriving at the school are supported well because leaders take time to understand them as individuals. Parents are positive about the school and appreciate the decisions leaders make in pupils' best interests.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They use information, including pupils' achievement and attendance, to shape the school's priorities. Leaders and governors monitor these priorities regularly. When progress is slower than expected, leaders take appropriate action. Governors meet their statutory duties, including ensuring that funding is used appropriately. They oversee resources carefully and provide suitable challenge to support the school's continued improvement.

Staff, including those new to teaching, value the professional learning opportunities provided. Leaders seek staff views when planning development work, which helps ensure training meets their needs. Staff say that ongoing professional development is increasing their confidence in supporting pupils' learning, including helping pupils become more independent.

Leaders and governors take steps to support staff with their workload and wellbeing. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to streamline systems and routines, and the collaborative work with the trust to strengthen aspects of the curriculum. Staff feel that leaders are approachable and considerate of the pressures of school life, which contributes to a positive working environment.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this highly inclusive school. They describe it fondly as 'the Swell family'. Every pupil is known as an individual and their identity is celebrated. For example, pupils choose a pebble and decorate it to represent themselves within the 'family of the school'. Pupils learn to be reflective and thoughtful by writing down wishes or worries and placing them in the stream.

Staff create warm and nurturing relationships. They listen to pupils and help them with any concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for. Bullying is rare, and when it does occur, it is dealt with promptly and effectively. This contributes to a strong sense of belonging. Attendance falls short of national expectations because of the nature of this smaller-than-average school. However, the school's sustained work with families is helping attendance to improve.

Pupils are positive representatives of the school. The values of 'CPR' (compassion, peace and respect) provide clear expectations for behaviour. Pupils understand that these behaviours will support them beyond their time at Swell, and they respond well to these expectations.

Pupils achieve well from their starting points. Many join the school at different times during their primary education. Staff take time to understand each pupil and any barriers to their learning. They use thoughtful strategies to reduce these barriers so that pupils can access the curriculum well. Because of the school's small size, this is not always reflected in published outcomes.

Pupils take pride in the contributions they make to their school community and beyond. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils encourage others in the local community to support charitable causes, including promoting charity days on a local radio show. Following a 'crochet craze', pupils were supported to set up a crochet club. The school tracks participation closely to ensure that every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, benefits from its wider offer.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff support pupils to develop correct letter formation so that they can write more fluently and confidently.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and address misconceptions in pupils' written work so that pupils do not continue to make repeated errors.
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About this inspection

This school is part of North Cotswold Schools Federation 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), Jackie Buckland, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Melanie Huttunen.

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 executive headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of staff. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO.

Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. They considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Gloucester. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school was carried out in January 2020.

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

Alison Rawlings: Executive Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Lakmini Harkus, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Malcolm Willis, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

36

Well below 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

56

Well 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)

24.24%

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

0.00%

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

25.00%

Well above 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		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	88%	74%	Above
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	72%	S
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23		71%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	74%	S
2023/24 (final)	63%	73%	Below
2022/23		73%	

‘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

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

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

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

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

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23		79%	

‘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)	6.9%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	5.0%	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)	22.6%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.8%	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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