

Wells-Next-the-Sea Primary and Nursery School

Address: Polka Road, Wells-Next-the-Sea, Norfolk, NR23 1JG

Unique reference number (URN): 144975

Inspection report: 28 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have secured improvements to pupils' attendance over the last 3 years. Overall attendance is now only slightly below the national average. To reinforce the importance of regular attendance, staff work closely with parents and carers. The school uses support plans and targeted help to remove barriers for families. This includes families facing emotional challenges that lead to school avoidance. Leaders take appropriate and effective action when pupils are frequently absent. Leaders collaborate with other local schools, including secondary schools, to ensure consistent approaches to supporting regular attendance across age phases. Attendance for many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved since leaders introduced the school's Ebb and Flow and Starfish classes.

Pupils behave well overall. They play positively together. Staff respond quickly and consistently to any rough play. Pupils know that staff will challenge any incidents of bullying, discrimination or harassment promptly and effectively. Pupils generally show positive attitudes to learning. Staff usually set clear and consistent expectations for pupils' behaviour. This supports pupils to focus on their learning and to achieve well. Occasionally, staff do not make behaviour expectations clear enough. When this happens, a few pupils lose focus, and this hinders their learning.

Pupils with SEND who need support for their behaviour receive this promptly. This helps them to develop positive behaviour that supports their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum from the early years to Year 6. They have made some recent refinements to the curriculum to reflect the school's mixed-age classes and changing pupil numbers. Staff typically teach the curriculum effectively. Staff generally make careful adaptations to their teaching so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can learn successfully. Most staff explain learning clearly to pupils. They identify when pupils may have any missing knowledge and address it. This helps pupils to learn well. On a few occasions, teaching is less effective because staff do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly enough. When this happens, pupils' learning is less secure.

Leaders have made changes to the English curriculum and how it is taught. These changes are having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress in reading and writing. Pupils talk confidently about their learning. They use resources such as their knowledge organisers to remember key vocabulary. Leaders have also made improvements to the curriculum for mathematics. Staff have received additional training to improve their delivery of this curriculum. Pupils learn the intended curriculum content at each stage of their education. This includes in the early years, where mathematics provides a secure foundation through strong early number work and clear progression.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders make sure that children in the early years have a positive start to learning. Leaders carefully plan the curriculum in the early years. They have considered progression from birth to age 5, ensuring children build knowledge step by step. Staff use assessments to identify any additional needs, barriers to learning and/or wellbeing or missing knowledge as quickly as possible. They make careful adaptations to provision to reflect these needs so that all children can learn well.

Teaching in the early years is typically effective and supports children's engagement and confidence. Leaders ensure that staff support children's language development well. For example, staff model using language effectively. This helps children to understand and use new vocabulary. The nursery curriculum focuses strongly on routines, play, language and early mathematics. Children settle quickly and understand expectations. The learning environment supports children's independence and curiosity. Learning in the Reception Year builds directly on learning in the nursery. Children generally achieve well from their starting points, especially in mathematics.

Children's welfare and their personal, social and emotional development are a priority. Children feel safe and happy. Children describe staff as kind and helpful. Children in the nursery show a strong sense of belonging within the wider school.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school strives to meet the diverse and wide-ranging needs of its pupils. Leaders provide staff with training to help them develop more inclusive practice. For instance, staff have recently received training relating to autism and communication strategies. This supports staff to identify and address pupils' needs promptly. In the early years, staff communicate well with local early years providers and with parents and carers. This helps staff to develop a clear understanding of children's needs before they join the school.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum has been designed to reflect pupils' varying needs. Staff typically adapt lessons well so that all pupils can access learning. They usually provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as those who need help to keep up with their learning. The Ebb and Flow and Starfish classes provide more bespoke support to pupils with SEND. This support is usually effective in helping pupils to manage their behaviour, focus and engage successfully in learning.

Staff use information from their assessments to evaluate the impact of the support that they provide. They work effectively with parents, carers and pupils to review and update pupils' individual plans so that pupils continue to make progress. Leaders and staff work effectively with external agencies and the trust to ensure that pupils receive additional help if they need it. Parents of pupils with SEND speak positively about the support their children receive.

Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully. They make appropriate use of pupil premium funding to remove barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and to ensure

that they have equal access to wider development opportunities. Leaders ensure that pupils known to social care are well supported, for example, through effective pastoral care.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics are beginning to make a difference to pupils' learning. Reading is a clear focus across the school. Leaders use external support and professional development to build staff's expertise and improve their delivery of the curriculum. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.

Leaders take staff's wellbeing into account when planning improvement work. Staff feel supported during recent changes in leadership. The local governing body understands the school's context, strengths and challenges. Alongside the trust, they support the school effectively. The trust ensures the school meets its statutory duties.

The trust supports the school's leadership effectively. For example, it has put in place appropriate interim leadership arrangements to cover temporary staff absence. Those responsible for governance work closely with leaders to maintain their improvements in teaching and learning. The trust provides targeted challenge and guidance to support school improvement. For instance, trust leaders help the school to improve assessment. They work with school leaders to monitor and refine their work.

Leaders ensure staff receive professional development that supports priorities for school improvement. Leaders balance these activities with attention to staff workload in order to maintain a healthy balance. Parents and carers and the wider community engage positively with the school. Leaders value this partnership working and continue to build these relationships in pupils' best interests.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders place personal development and wellbeing at the heart of the school's work. They have designed a programme of activities that makes the most of opportunities in the locality. For instance, pupils have opportunities to work with local charities, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the local farming estate. Teachers inspire learning through initiatives such as '50 things to do before you are 5'.

Through competitions in sport, the arts and robotics, pupils build confidence and resilience while understanding how these activities link to their classroom learning. To ensure the personal development programme remains effective, leaders gather pupils' views and adapt opportunities as interests or needs change. Staff carefully align these experiences with the curriculum to ensure breadth and balance.

Pupils learn to respect others and recognise differences. They show an emerging understanding of diversity through work about other countries and cultures. They learn right and wrong through discussion and shared experiences. They explore responsibility through real roles and decision-making. Year 6 pupils take on a range of responsibilities across the school.

Staff teach relationships and sex education and health education in an age-appropriate way. Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Pupils understand online and offline risks and know how to seek help. Leaders consult parents annually about the content of the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from effective pastoral support. Pupils know trusted staff will help with any concerns.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Leaders have recognised that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should, especially in writing and mathematics. They have made improvements to the curriculum that are beginning to have a positive impact. However, this impact is not yet evident in pupils' achievement in the national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6.

Pupils build secure foundational knowledge in reading. Staff ensure that pupils have the phonics knowledge that they need to read unfamiliar words. Staff promote pupils' comprehension skills effectively. Pupils' achievement in the national reading tests is similar to the national average. However, some pupils do not develop secure spelling and handwriting skills. They repeat errors because staff do not identify issues swiftly. Consequently, these pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, typically make appropriate progress from their starting points. As a result of additional support, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is closing. Most pupils learn well in the different subjects that they study and develop the knowledge needed for their next stage of education.

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

Pupils enjoy learning the school's ambitious curriculum, which helps them to learn more about their local community of Wells. Pupils are proud of their community and their school. They talk positively about their learning and are usually eager to share their work. Most concentrate in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are vulnerable typically receive effective support if they need it. This helps them to overcome any barriers to their learning and to take part fully in all aspects of school life.

This is a caring community where staff know pupils and their parents and carers well. Parents value the education and care pupils receive. Pupils talk positively about trusted adults. They know what to do if they feel unsafe, either online or in the community. Older pupils talk about how the school has helped them to make progress and overcome challenges. Pupils have opportunities to represent their school by participating in sporting events and by becoming members of the eco and school councils.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school and learning. For example, pupils with SEND who attend the school's Ebb and Flow and Starfish classes enjoy learning in the calm and welcoming atmosphere that these classes provide. Children in the early years get off to a positive start to learning. Children who join the school from other nurseries soon settle in as a result of the effective support that they receive.

Pupils know what to do if they do not feel safe. Bullying is rare. Pupils trust the staff to help them if they have a worry or concern. Pupils' attendance is improving. Close links with the local secondary school mean that pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, so that these gaps are swiftly addressed.
 - Leaders should make sure that staff teach the curriculum consistently well.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff consistently model and reinforce routines and expectations to further improve behaviour for learning.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Wensum 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), Daniel Thrower, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Smith.

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 head of school and other school leaders during the inspection. They also spoke to the CEO, leaders within the trust and members of the local academy board.

The school uses one alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Rachel Stroulger

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Imran Khan, Ofsted Inspector

Jules Stops, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

202

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)

24.29%

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

2.97%

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

18.32%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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	39%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	47%	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	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66%	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	57%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	47%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	63%	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	49%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	40%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	47%	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	29%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	30%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	71%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	70%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	90%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	39%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	40%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	38%	58%	Below

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	43%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	29%	68%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	30%	69%	-39 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	25%	66%	-41 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	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	70%	81%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	90%	80%	10 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 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	39%	78%	-38 pp
2024/25 (final)	40%	78%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	78%	-38 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	77%	-40 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	43%	80%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	25%	79%	-54 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 (3 term)	6.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	5.9%	Above

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 (3 term)	16.7%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	18.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	30.6%	16.2%	Above

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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