

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Scarisbrick

Address: Hall Road, Scarisbrick, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L40 9QE

Unique reference number (URN): 119683

Inspection report: 3 February 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 prioritise attendance successfully. Overall attendance is above the national average. Leaders' careful, consistent work over time has led to ongoing improvements for all groups of pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable groups of pupils. Leaders keep a close check on pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and provide timely, personalised support. As a result, the rate of persistent absence is now below the national average. Leaders meet regularly to review attendance, work closely with families and use positive messages and incentives to encourage positive habits.

Leaders ensure that staff understand and consistently apply the school's approach to behaviour. Staff are positive role models. Where needed, staff effectively support pupils who find the transition into school difficult. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils behave well during lessons and breaktimes. Breaktimes are calm and positive, with pupils forming friendly relationships that help create a happy atmosphere. Pupils follow routines well and in lessons they settle into learning quickly.

Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They show respect towards one another. As a result, incidents of any discriminatory behaviour are rare. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem in the school and that, if anything did happen, they trust staff to sort it out quickly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have effectively improved provision in early years since the previous inspection. Children learn in a calm, well-organised environment where they can explore and enjoy their activities. They are welcomed warmly by staff who work hard to make sure children settle quickly and feel confident. Leaders develop positive, productive relationships with parents and carers before the children join the school. Staff also work closely with families to remove any barriers to attendance or learning.

The curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to build children's knowledge step by step. Leaders have considered the curriculum for the younger children in Nursery Year carefully. Adults make the most of learning time, using high-quality interactions to develop children's speaking and listening skills. Activities have clear purpose. Where needed, staff adapt them to support the nursery-aged children and meet their needs. Collectively this helps children to make progress through the curriculum, including securing early mathematical and communication skills. Children develop a wide, rich vocabulary which they use in context when describing aspects of their topics. Children enjoy shared stories and use new words with growing confidence. Leaders prioritise phonics to ensure that children develop secure knowledge quickly. This typically helps children to be ready for their learning in Year 1.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Although some aspects need further refinement, leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of where

improvements are required. For example, they recognise that improvements to the curriculum, teaching and pupils' achievement are required. Leaders are well placed to make these improvements. They make decisions in the best interests of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers to their wellbeing.

Governors receive the information they need to evaluate the school's performance. They use this information to support and challenge leaders, ensuring pupils' best interests remain central. Leaders welcome this challenge and reflect carefully on their work. For example, they have already improved the early years provision and pupils' attendance.

Leaders ensure that staff receive opportunities for professional learning that helps them improve their teaching. This training has already strengthened the delivery of the phonics programme. Leaders provide effective support for staff workload and wellbeing and recognise the extra pressures that come with working in a small school. Staff feel that leaders genuinely care about them as individuals and create a culture of trust and collaboration. Leaders and staff work together effectively as a team.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's approach to personal development is becoming a strength. Pupils follow a well-sequenced personal development programme that is carefully adapted to the school's Catholic ethos and to the specific needs of the pupils. It helps them to develop their confidence. For example, pupils take on a range of leadership roles such as school councillors, sports or play leaders.

Leaders make sure pupils learn about the wider world, including about different cultures and faiths, to prepare them for life in modern Britain. They have also introduced new texts and activities to help broaden pupils' understanding of diversity. They make regular visits to different places of worship, including the local church, to put their learning into practice.

Pastoral care is highly effective. Staff know families very well and offer practical support if it is needed. Pupils also take part in a range of opportunities that help them understand life beyond school. For example, pupils work with different charities in the local community.

Pupils benefit from a broad, varied enrichment offer. Leaders monitor participation closely to ensure all pupils can take part. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to promote their engagement. Pupils have access to a wide range of arts and sports opportunities such as fencing, cycling and mini wheelers. Pupils relish the opportunity to use the track on the school field and take part in 'Friday Fitness'. The school has earned external recognition, including an inclusion award for encouraging girls' involvement in sport.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. A well-taught personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is building up pupils' knowledge. It includes age-appropriate relationships education, opportunities for pupils to learn about staying safe online and how they can keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Work on pupils' knowledge of the differences between people that are protected by law, such as age and disability, is developing.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils do not consistently achieve well enough in national tests. Although pupils typically reach the expected standard in reading in Year 6 and the phonics screening check in Year 1, this is not replicated in other subjects. For example, pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics is not as secure. In these subjects, not enough pupils reach the expected level by the end of key stage 2. In addition, some pupils are not reaching the higher standard in key stage 2 national tests when they are capable of doing so.

Pupils' work shows that progress is not secure enough for some pupils. Some pupils still have gaps in their learning and these gaps are not closing quickly enough. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Gaps in some pupils' knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics hampers their ability to learn the curriculum well. When these gaps are closed effectively, pupils achieve well and are ready for the next stage in their education. However, some pupils are not as well prepared as they could be. Leaders have set about improving how well pupils achieve over time, but it is too soon to see the impact.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is variable. Teachers do not routinely identify or address gaps in pupils' basic knowledge of handwriting, spelling or number facts quickly enough. These gaps sometimes affect pupils' confidence and the quality of their work. Teachers check pupils' learning, but they do not always use this information well. At times, pupils move on before they have fully secured earlier learning. Gaps remain, including for some disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils who are ready for greater challenge do not always have the chance to deepen their skills and knowledge.

Leaders understand clearly what works well in the school's curriculum and teaching and where improvements are still needed. They are taking action to make teaching more consistent across subjects and year groups. In places, this is successfully bearing fruit.

Leaders have put in place a broad and ambitious curriculum with clear expectations for every pupil. It is well designed. Leaders make sure staff have the subject knowledge they need. They support teachers to make effective adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers. Staff know pupils well. They provide the right support so pupils can catch up quickly with reading, writing, mathematics and vocabulary when gaps in their knowledge are identified.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

At times, staff do not identify and assess pupils' individual needs with enough consistency. Where this is less effective, staff do not clearly define pupils' barriers to learning. Assessment information is not used effectively enough to shape next steps. As a result, some of the individual targets that teachers set for pupils lack rigour and focus. They lack

the measurable steps needed to ensure that pupils' barriers to learning are removed effectively. In addition, some adjustments do not match pupils' needs. There are pockets of more effective practice. Where this exists, staff identify barriers more precisely and use this understanding to set effective targets.

Leaders are improving inclusion and reducing barriers to learning and wellbeing through a range of strategic actions. They have established clear systems to guide staff in assessing additional needs. Leaders use specialist guidance and targeted support, for example adding comprehensive pastoral and financial help to practical initiatives to improve pupils' access to learning. They ensure staff track pupils' progress and evaluate the impact of interventions, adjusting provision quickly when needed.

Leaders provide training so staff understand and implement systems effectively. They work with families, external professionals and agencies to shape pupils' support and aspirations. Leaders target additional funding to address specific barriers and sharpen impact. For pupils known to social care, leaders coordinate pastoral support and liaise with the local authority where appropriate.

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

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging within this warm and caring school community. They are welcomed, valued and included as individuals. Families frequently comment on the school's sense of 'togetherness'. Pupils describe it as a place where they feel safe, supported and able to be themselves. Positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin this culture. Pupils trust adults to listen carefully to any concerns and act swiftly, including when dealing with bullying. They treat one another with kindness and respect, acting as considerate friends and positive role models.

Recent improvements to the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement, with many now building more securely on what they know and can do. While progress is strengthening, leaders recognise that further work is required to ensure that all pupils benefit equally. This includes ensuring that pupils have the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics that they need for later success. Some disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those known or previously known to children's social care do not yet achieve as well as they could because barriers to their learning are not removed consistently. Leaders continue to refine systems so that these pupils receive timely, precise support and can make better progress through the curriculum.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their positive attitudes contribute to a calm and purposeful learning environment and support the success of others. As the curriculum has become more stimulating, pupils' motivation has increased, which is reflected in improving attendance. Pupils also benefit from rich opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. Activities such as speaking at church events, taking part in community projects and visiting places such as a local eco-centre and Liverpool city centre broaden their experiences and deepen their understanding of life in modern Britain. These opportunities help pupils develop confidence, responsibility and the skills needed to contribute positively to their school and wider communities.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other vulnerabilities have their barriers identified with more precision and that they support staff to use this information to set more pertinent targets which are closely reviewed and acted upon.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers check, identify and respond swiftly and routinely to gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge, particularly in transcription and number facts, so that these gaps close quickly.
 - Leaders should ensure that consistently effective teaching supports pupils to deepen and embed their knowledge and understanding so that those who are capable, achieve the higher standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Les Rippon.

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 met with a group of governors including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Roman Catholic character. The last section 48 inspection took place February 2025.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

The school runs a nursery provision under the same registration.

The school has undergone a significant change since the previous inspection. A new headteacher has been appointed to the school.

Headteacher: Joanne Preston

Lead inspector:

Stuart Perkins, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Elliot Costas-Walker, His Majesty's 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 3 February 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

68

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

105

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)

17.65%

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

1.47%

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

4.41%

Well 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	40%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	53%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	14%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	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)	76%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

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	56%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	59%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	83%	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		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24		46%	
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		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
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		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
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		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
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		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
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		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	6.3%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.0%	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)	16.4%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	22.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	22.7%	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.

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