

St John's CofE First School

Address: Whiteoaks Drive, Bishopswood, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 9AH

Unique reference number (URN): 145380

Inspection report: 2 June 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 ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

The school's welcoming and inclusive culture is praised by many parents. Leaders identify pupils' needs and any barriers they may face quickly and accurately. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Support is put in place for those who need it. Regular reviews ensure that this is effective and impactful.

Staff are highly trained and knowledgeable. They know the children very well. Careful adaptations are made to teaching and the learning environment. This enables all pupils to access the full curriculum. Leaders work closely with external specialists to ensure that pupils get the support they need. As a result, their barriers to learning and wellbeing reduce over time, and they make good progress from their starting points.

The needs of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are identified and addressed effectively. Pupils receive support with their learning, attendance and wellbeing. Progress is carefully tracked, and leaders ensure that pupils are included in the wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer. Staff work effectively with parents to overcome difficulties and ensure success.

Pupils benefit from thoughtfully planned transitions at every stage of their school journey. Leaders' inclusive approach ensures that pupils feel safe, valued and part of the community. Pupils settle quickly and develop a genuine sense of belonging.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have implemented a considered and coherent approach to personal development that is firmly rooted in the school's Christian values. These values are reflected throughout the curriculum and wider provision, meaning pupils have frequent and meaningful opportunities to reflect on themselves, others and the world around them. Leaders have used the school's context to shape the curriculum so that it includes relevant content. For example, teaching about a range of faiths, visits to places of worship and engagement with local faith communities deepen pupils' understanding of diversity.

Pupils are taught about British values alongside their school values. This helps them to understand concepts such as democracy, respect and the rule of law in ways that are relevant to their daily lives. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum ensures that pupils know the difference between healthy and unhealthy friendships. They know how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the local community. Pupils describe in detail how to stay physically and mentally healthy, and they understand the difference between right and wrong.

A wide range of enrichment opportunities support pupils' academic and personal growth. These include clubs, trips to historical places of interest and sculpture parks, 'wow' days and residential visits. Leaders monitor participation closely to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit fully and take action where needed to remove barriers. Strong pastoral systems

enable staff, parents and pupils to raise concerns and leaders to provide targeted support when needed.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' futures. They talk to pupils about the steps needed to make their dreams become a reality. As a result, pupils have high expectations of themselves. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education and beyond.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Recent published outcomes show that pupils perform above average in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Although achievement in the multiplication tables check at the end of Year 4 has been below average in recent years, it is improving because pupils are developing stronger recall of multiplications facts.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally achieve well from their starting points. Staff provide tailored support that helps them to make progress and become more independent. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education and learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils secure early foundations in reading and mathematics. This supports them to access the wider curriculum with increasing confidence as they move through the school. Leaders recognise that some pupils need greater support to develop accuracy in handwriting and spelling in order to become fluent and independent writers.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' overall attendance is currently just above the national average. Leaders have strengthened their approach to managing attendance, and this is having a positive impact. They thoroughly check reasons for absence and act quickly to provide support to families. This includes work with external agencies where appropriate. Leaders are aware that the attendance of a small number of disadvantaged pupils is below average. They have put strategies in place to address this, and they are starting to have a positive impact.

Behaviour across the school is very positive. This is because leaders' high expectations, clear routines and the school rules of 'Be ready, Be respectful, Be safe' help pupils understand what is expected of them. Furthermore, staff apply the behaviour policy positively and consistently. On the very rare occasion that a pupil requires additional support, leaders intervene effectively.

Trusting relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel safe and supported. Bullying is not accepted, and pupils are clear that staff deal with concerns quickly and effectively. This results in a calm, purposeful learning environment. Pupils are respectful, responsible and ready to learn.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured that there is an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum in place. 'Big questions' provide clear purpose and direction for each unit of work. Leaders identify the key knowledge and vocabulary pupils must learn and sequence this into logical small steps. Teachers have secure subject knowledge because leaders provide effective training and support. As a result, teaching is generally clear and well structured. However, some variation remains in the quality of teaching across the school.

Staff know pupils' needs very well. This allows them to adapt their teaching and put the right support in place for all pupils. Staff provide additional support, use flexible grouping and make careful adaptations to ensure that all pupils can access their learning. Leaders monitor these adaptations and make changes when needed.

Pupils learn to read effectively using phonics. As a result, most pupils gain the skills they need to learn to read. Any pupils who need extra help are supported to catch up quickly.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and the curriculum. They regularly visit lessons and work alongside staff to identify strengths and next steps. Leaders typically act quickly when they spot areas that need improvement. They now need to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently high across the school.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision for the early years. The curriculum is well structured and sequenced. It identifies precisely the knowledge and skills children need to be successful in key stage 1. Early years staff work closely together to ensure that provision builds on what children already know. They adapt their teaching carefully to meet the needs of different groups of children. Adults are supported through regular monitoring and targeted professional development. For example, recent training has strengthened the quality of staff interactions with children.

In Nursery Year, communication and language are prioritised. Rich vocabulary, songs and rhymes are embedded throughout the day. Children's personal, social and emotional development is effective. They demonstrate confidence and curiosity and develop positive relationships with staff and peers. Children use their phonics knowledge successfully when learning to read in the Reception Year. Adults encourage children to concentrate, explore and talk about their ideas.

Strong relationships between staff and parents ensure that children get off to a smooth start. Staff inform parents about how to support learning at home as their children grow. This means children are well prepared for Year 1. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and the areas they want to improve further.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a clear ethos where pupils are placed firmly at the heart of everything they do. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They

praise the strong relationships between staff and pupils and describe a nurturing school where children thrive academically and emotionally.

Leaders understand the school's strengths. They identify priorities for improvement accurately. Leaders are focused on maintaining and further improving pupils' positive outcomes. They have worked hard to develop an environment where children achieve well and feel they belong.

Staff are well supported by leaders and value the consideration given to their workload and wellbeing. Leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality professional learning. Staff also benefit from opportunities to work with colleagues across the trust. This strengthens staff confidence and contributes to an effective learning environment for pupils. Staff express high levels of confidence in leaders and are proud to work at the school.

Those responsible for governance provide a suitable balance of support and challenge. Governors meet their statutory duties and have a clear understanding of the school's performance. They ask thoughtful questions and hold leaders to account while working constructively with them in the best interests of pupils. Leaders also work positively with other professionals and the wider community to support pupils' wellbeing and learning.

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

Pupils at St. John's C of E First School are happy, enthusiastic and confident. They enjoy coming to school because they find learning interesting and fun. The school values of perseverance, courage, friendship, trust, compassion and respect are clearly evident in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They show kindness and empathy towards one another and are proud of their school.

Pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school site. They engage positively in their learning because the curriculum is inspiring, taught well and extends beyond the classroom. Pupils are resilient and independent. They understand the impact of unkind behaviour and value differences. Bullying is very rare, and pupils are confident that adults act quickly to resolve any concerns.

When pupils start school, staff get to know them and their families well. This means that any barriers they may face can be addressed quickly and support put in place. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and caring. As a result, pupils thrive at school and make good progress.

Pupils find the broad and balanced curriculum engaging and inspiring. They appreciate the wide range of curricular trips and visits that extend their learning and deepen their understanding. Adaptations are made to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, can access their learning. This contributes to pupils achieving well across the curriculum.

Pupils value the wide range of enriching experiences on offer. These include educational visits, leadership roles and extra-curricular clubs, which all pupils benefit from. They talk

enthusiastically about their aspirations for the future and are very well prepared for life in the wider world beyond their rural community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that most effective teaching practice is implemented consistently across all year groups.
 - Leaders should improve the accuracy of handwriting and spelling for those pupils who do not yet apply them consistently in their work.
 - Leaders should continue their work to raise the attendance of vulnerable groups.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Penk Valley 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), Trevor Sutcliffe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Roberts.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of staff during the inspection. They also spoke with representatives of the trust, including the CEO and representatives of the trust board and local governing committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use alternative provision.

Headteacher: Emma Challiner

Lead inspector:

Claire Medhurst, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Christian Hamilton, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

76

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

75

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)

11.29%

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

1.32%

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

18.42%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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).

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)	5.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	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 (3 term)	7.4%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	17.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	18.3%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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.

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