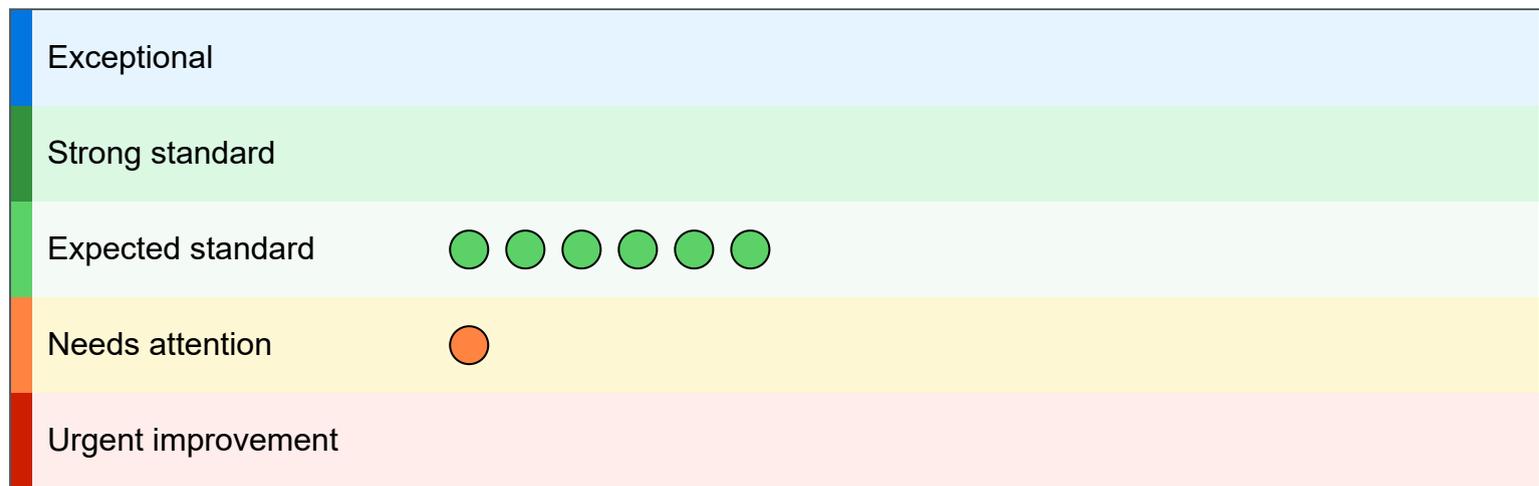


# Chester-Le-Street CofE (Controlled) Primary School

Address: Hilda Park, DH2 2JT

Unique reference number (URN): 114213

## Inspection report: 9 December 2025



### ✔ 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 

Teachers welcome their pupils warmly at the beginning of every school day. The school's pastoral staff liaise with parents closely to overcome any anxieties about school that pupils may have. The school's expert pastoral practitioners provide emotional wellbeing workshops for parents and their children. Leaders' strategies to improve pupils' attendance are effective. Currently, most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 attend school regularly. The attendance of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved in recent years.

Pupils' behaviour is typically positive in and outside of lessons. Pupils are polite and respectful. They talk about this being a kind school. Bullying is rare, and pupils are confident that staff address any issues if they arise. Leaders have developed and implemented a positive behaviour approach. Pupils say that they want to behave because, 'It is the right thing to do.' On occasion, pupils lose focus in lessons. This is usually addressed by teachers appropriately and swiftly. The youngest pupils take pride in their work. However, this pride is less evident for the older children. Pupils with SEND benefit from bespoke positive behaviour support to enable them to regulate their behaviour and emotions well, if they begin to struggle.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum has recently been rewritten to support pupils to know and remember more. It is carefully designed and sequenced so that pupils can revisit and link new content to prior learning. Themes run through the curriculum to make it relevant and accessible to pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Pupils learn about their local historical heritage and the geographical features of the area in which they live before moving on to national and global themes. Leaders have made improvements to the teaching of phonics. These are in their infancy and are yet to show impact on pupil outcomes. High-quality texts are now used to broaden pupils' vocabulary. Leaders have identified that they need to further develop teaching so that pupils' grammar, punctuation, handwriting and spelling improves. Additionally, reading books given to older pupils do not give them enough opportunities to apply their phonic knowledge and develop fluency in their reading.

Assessment is used effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers usually make adaptations in lessons for pupils with barriers to learning. Teachers regularly review pupils' progress to ensure that pupils secure knowledge over time. However, some pupils who have gaps in their understanding do not receive support to help them catch up.

### Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the early years. The environment inspires children to explore, learn and develop independence. Staff foster children's skills, such as problem-solving, creativity and social-emotional development. Historically, a significant minority of children have not been

ready for the next stage of their education. However, the recently developed 2- and 3-year-old provision helps children get off to a flying start. This is starting to positively impact pupils' school readiness in Year 1.

The newly introduced early years foundation stage curriculum has a strong emphasis on communication, language and personal development. High-quality interactions between adults and children extend and embed a wide range of vocabulary. Staff provide activities that support the development of gross and fine motor skills. Phonics is taught with precision. Children have opportunities to apply their new learning and practise the sounds that they have learned, so they remember them well. Children develop a secure understanding of number. Leaders recognise the importance of early detection of speech, language and communication delays and other barriers to learning. Staff help children to make progress from their starting points using targeted intervention. Most children sustain concentration well as they engage with activities and discussions. They show consideration for the needs of others. They are familiar with the routines and understand the expectations of them. Relationships between adults and children are positive and warm. This creates a safe and nurturing environment.

## **Inclusion**

**Expected standard** ●

Leaders have created an inclusive school where pupils thrive. Staff work together to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Pupils' needs are assessed quickly and appropriate adaptations introduced that help remove barriers to their learning.

Staff benefit from high-quality training that enables them to support pupils skilfully in-and-outside of lessons. Targeted interventions are designed, so pupils can keep up and, where necessary, catch up with their peers. The school works effectively with external agencies, such as the headteacher of the virtual school and specialist services, to provide additional support for pupils. Parents, pupils and staff contribute to appropriate support plans for pupils with SEND, those known to social care and pupils with other barriers to learning. The school's strategies are tailored to pupils' individual needs. These ensure that pupils access learning successfully.

The school has a clear strategy for pupil premium funding. The impact of approaches is carefully and regularly reviewed. This leads to appropriate adjustments to further secure pupils' progress. Leaders also focus on improving attendance among disadvantaged pupils. Early impact is evident; however, further work is required to secure sustained improved attendance.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Expected standard** ●

Leaders, including governors, have a clear and accurate understanding of the school. Leaders have taken recent action to help pupils secure the key knowledge and skills they need in reading and writing. Newly introduced strategies are improving the quality of phonics and the teaching of writing. Governors are committed to supporting the school to improve. They hold leaders to account and provide professional challenge. They also ensure that resources are directed appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities thrive. This is due to the passion and expertise of leaders in identifying need and accessing support. All staff benefit from high-quality professional learning that enables them to meet the needs of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have other barriers to learning.

Leaders have designed professional learning to equip staff at all levels with the skills required to drive school improvement, such as the development of the curriculum. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved. Staff feel valued and report that leaders and governors are mindful of workload. Most parents and carers are very positive about the school. However, a significant minority feel concerns are not addressed quickly enough. The family liaison officer supports parents and signposts them to external services when appropriate.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Expected standard** 

The school has developed a structured and inclusive programme for personal development. Leaders and staff believe pupils cannot succeed academically without effective personal development, so have woven the programme through both the academic and non-academic curriculum. This creates a rich foundation of experiences and knowledge, supporting pupils to make a positive contribution to both the school and the wider community. Leaders and staff are proactive in encouraging all pupils to participate in a broad range of activities. For example, pupil premium funding is used to subsidise educational visits, including theatre trips and visits to local places of interest, ensuring equal access for all. The programme equips pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn to respect and tolerate people from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. Some pupils can articulate how concepts such as individual liberty must operate within the rule of law. However, pupils are less secure in their understanding of protected characteristics, and leaders recognise that this aspect of the curriculum requires further development.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strengthened through a comprehensive assembly programme, visits to the local church, trips to London and a range of visitors who enrich the curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about art and music and take pride in their achievements in these areas. They understand the difference between right and wrong. This is further underpinned by the school's Christian values. Leaders aspire for these values to be consistently reflected in pupils' behaviour beyond the school environment.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe both online and offline. They learn about healthy relationships and the changes that occur during puberty. The curriculum is carefully adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring that they are well prepared for their next stage of education and increasing independence.

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## Needs attention ●

### Achievement

Needs attention ●

A significant minority of pupils have gaps in their learning. The attainment of these pupils in examinations is below the national averages. In 2025, too many pupils did not achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check. This means that these pupils are not ready for the next stage of education where they need to read, write and access the broader curriculum. Leaders have strengthened the teaching of phonics, but it is too early to see the impact, other than in the early years where children develop more secure phonics knowledge. Older pupils who need extra help are not supported as well as they could be to develop their reading as they progress through school's curriculum.

Throughout the school, a significant minority of pupils do not make sufficient progress to improve key writing skills. Leaders have recently implemented a handwriting, grammar and spelling programme to address these gaps in knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are generally making the progress that they should. Disadvantaged pupils achieve broadly in line with disadvantaged pupils nationally. In mathematics and reading, the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is slightly narrowing. As a result of the new, broader curriculum, pupils can recall some knowledge and make some links across the curriculum.

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

Chester-le-Street Church of England Primary School is a warm, welcoming and inclusive school. Leaders and staff know pupils well. Pupils new to the school, regardless of needs or background, quickly settle and feel that they belong. Classrooms provide inspiring settings that promote learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences. Pupils with barriers to learning are supported well to access the school's offer. They benefit from the range of opportunities at the school. Staff are kind and caring with pupils and their families. Leaders have prioritised their work to engage and support parents and carers. Pupils typically attend well because they feel welcomed and understood by staff.

By the end of Year 6, most children are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is reflected in national test outcomes. However, further work is needed to improve outcomes in phonics to ensure that more pupils have the knowledge they need to be successful learners. Pupils are proud of the creative work that they produce, such as the William Morris-style prints, which are particularly impressive. Visitors to the school and educational visits help to bring learning to life and instil in pupils an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for all. They have a secure understanding of the importance of equality.

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. Leaders design activities that build early reading, writing and mathematics skills. Staff frequently use songs, rhymes and stories to make learning engaging. Personal development strategies are carefully chosen to nurture rounded individuals. For example, pupils learn how their brains work, helping them build resilience and manage their emotions. Pupils are polite and respectful. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Pupils feel safe and report that bullying is rare. They are confident staff deal swiftly and effectively with any incidents that may occur.

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## Next steps

- Leaders need to ensure that gaps in pupils' key knowledge in writing and phonics are quickly closed by embedding the improvements introduced to the teaching of these aspects of the curriculum.
  - Leaders should ensure that older pupils who are still at the early stage of learning to read are supported to catch up swiftly, ensuring that activities and resources enable them to practise and embed their phonic knowledge.
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## About this inspection

The head teacher of this school is Mrs Rachel Butler.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mrs Barbara Wells.

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

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

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the governors, the other senior leaders, the representatives from the local authority, the Director of Education for the diocese of Durham, the other staff, the parents and the pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character.

The school includes a specially resourced provision for 15 pupils, which caters for pupils with autism and specific and/or moderate learning difficulties.

Headteacher: Rachel Butler

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### Lead inspector:

Nicky White, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspectors:

Richard Beadnall, His Majesty's Inspector

Belita Scott, 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 9 December 2025

## School and pupil context

**Total pupils**

**276**

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

**418**

Above 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)

**30.60%**

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

**6.16%**

Above 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**

**21.01%**

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)**

**Resourced provision**

### **What does this mean?**

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

## **Type of specialist provision (if applicable)**

**SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty**

### **What does this mean?**

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

## **All pupils' performance**

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and maths measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	61%	Close to average
2024/25	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	44%	61%	Below
2022/23	65%	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	68%	74%	Below
2024/25	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24	59%	74%	Below
2022/23	74%	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	74%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	74%	71%	Close to average

### Pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in maths.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	69%	73%	Close to average
<b>2024/25</b>	74%	74%	Close to average
<b>2023/24</b>	51%	73%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>	80%	73%	Close to average

## **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 maths**

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	43%	46%	Close to average
<b>2024/25</b>	45%	47%	Close to average
<b>2023/24</b>	33%	46%	Close to average
<b>2022/23</b>	54%	44%	Close to average

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	57%	62%	Close to average
<b>2024/25</b>	64%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23	54%	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	62%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	64%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	54%	58%	Close to average

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	60%	Close to average
2024/25	55%	61%	Close to average
2023/24	44%	59%	Below
2022/23	62%	59%	Close to average

### 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 maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	43%	68%	-25 pp
2024/25	45%	69%	-24 pp
2023/24	33%	67%	-34 pp
2022/23	54%	66%	-12 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	57%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25	64%	81%	-17 pp
2023/24	56%	80%	-24 pp
2022/23	54%	78%	-24 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
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	62%	78%	-16 pp
<b>2024/25</b>	64%	78%	-15 pp
<b>2023/24</b>	67%	78%	-11 pp
<b>2022/23</b>	54%	77%	-24 pp

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in maths

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	52%	80%	-27 pp
<b>2024/25</b>	55%	81%	-26 pp
<b>2023/24</b>	44%	79%	-35 pp
<b>2022/23</b>	62%	79%	-18 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
<b>2024/25 (2 terms)</b>	6.1%	5.2%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
<b>2022/23</b>	6.6%	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 terms)	14.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24	17.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23	19.8%	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 standards expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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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