

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Address: Crossgate Peth, Durham, County Durham, DH1 4QB

Unique reference number (URN): 114230

Inspection report: 17 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Attendance is very high across the school, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work well with families to establish routines and positive attendance habits. Pupils with specific barriers receive tailored support and adjustments to overcome these. Leaders promote positive attendance with all and make robust use of their analysis. Most importantly, pupils enjoy school, feel they belong and are keen to attend.

Pupils want to learn and have a real thirst for knowledge. They display positive attitudes throughout the day. This is evident in the purposeful and engaging classroom environments and buzz of enjoyment at breaktime. Pupils support each other well, with older pupils acting as brilliant role models. Pupils are trained by staff to support their younger peers. They independently deploy the skills that they have learned to support younger pupils at lunchtimes.

The school provides bespoke support for pupils with SEND or those who struggle to regulate their behaviour. Secure foundations are set in the early years as children learn to share and take turns. Staff help pupils to understand school routines and expectations for behaviour. They ensure that bullying is not tolerated. The comprehensive support to develop pupils' understanding of emotions, results in pupils regulating their own behaviour. Behaviour incidents have reduced significantly over time.

Early years

Strong standard ●

In the Reception Year, children get off to a flying start. They thrive in an environment that is truly rich in language and aspiration. Staff hold high ambitions and ensure that every interaction maximises learning. Reading and early language remain a priority throughout the day. Staff use songs, rhymes, stories and a highly effective phonics programme to build strong foundations for future learning. Staff rigorously check how well children are learning and developing, making changes swiftly if needed. Children are happy and enthusiastic about their learning.

The early years curriculum identifies the important knowledge that children will learn. Reading is prioritised, and children in the Reception Year begin to secure their knowledge of phonics right from the start. Staff understand each child's next steps, and weave these into planned activities and routines. Staff skilfully engage children in deliberate conversations, particularly those children who engage less readily. Consequently, children develop their language and widen their vocabulary. Leaders make highly effective adjustments to support pupils across all areas of learning and development. This enables children to progress seamlessly through the curriculum. As a result, they achieve well and are extremely well prepared for learning in Year 1.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well in most curriculum subjects. From their starting points, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well through the curriculum. Pupils consistently achieve above the national average in the phonics screening check and across the range of measures in key stage 2. This reflects the school's determination to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils develop accurate and fluent reading, spelling, handwriting and number skills, which they need to succeed. For example, children in Reception use their phonics knowledge to read letters and sounds and build words. Pupils develop appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. For example, they build effectively on their prior learning in mathematics. However, pupils do not consistently produce the high-quality work of which they are capable in other subjects, even though they have secure knowledge that they share well in discussion with their teachers.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school has an ambitious curriculum in place that is designed and sequenced well. It makes clear the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn and when. Leaders have an informed and accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and how effectively staff deliver it. For example, in both phonics and mathematics, the deliberate focus on fluency ensures that pupils confidently recall what they need to know. Staff routinely reflect on the impact the intended curriculum is having on pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This enables leaders to bring about necessary refinements.

The curriculum is taught well. Staff ensure that any gaps that arise in pupils' spelling and reading or language development are quickly addressed. Teachers use their subject knowledge to design engaging learning activities. They adapt their approaches so that pupils, including those with SEND, develop their understanding. Pupils learn the curriculum well because of this, particularly in English and mathematics. In art, for example, they learn the correct techniques they need to compose increasingly complex pieces. However, in some subjects, teaching is not as consistently effective as it could be. The high expectations that teachers have of pupils' knowledge and contributions to discussion in lessons, are not as consistently upheld in relation to the work that pupils produce.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have fostered an inclusive culture, which threads through all areas of the school. They use their knowledge of pupils' needs to ensure that pupils get the right support at the right time. The school works closely with external agencies, including the local authority, to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils even though numbers are low. Leaders are aware of the changing needs of pupils, including children in the early years.

Staff receive ongoing training so that their support for pupils has the intended impact. Leaders work sensitively with families through regular conversations and informal engagement. They identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately, drawing on staff observations, information about how well pupils achieve and positive relationships. Leaders take a thoughtful, child-centred approach, adapting lessons and adjusting tasks and providing help that is closely monitored for impact. Leaders work closely with teachers to ensure that support is purposeful and well matched to pupils' needs.

Leaders' use of additional funding is evidence informed and impactful. Their choices and analysis help to improve the education and wider personal development of disadvantaged pupils. Personalised provision ensures that pupils' needs are met with care and ambition.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors demonstrate a robust sense of ambition for the school. They hold a secure, well-informed understanding of its strengths and areas for further development. They take appropriate action to improve its provision and outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils known, or previously known, to children's social care. The impact of leaders' actions can be seen across the school, for example, in relation to improvements to the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. Leaders and governors make decisions that put pupils' learning, safety and wellbeing first. Decisions are well judged and reflect the school's context and priorities.

Governors fulfil their roles, understand the school's context and hold leaders to account appropriately. They have effective oversight of the school's performance and contribute positively to its improvement. The collective drive for all to thrive is a deeply shared passion of both governors and senior leaders. This is reflected in the high expectations observed in interactions across the school, which translate leaders' values into everyday practice.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is ambitious and inclusive. They monitor the quality of teaching regularly and make sure that staff, including teachers at the start of their careers, access a coherent professional learning programme that builds their expertise over time. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing. They take reasonable steps to manage workloads, including through their work with external agencies, to promote staff wellbeing across the school. Staff feel well supported and enjoy working here.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a coherent and well-sequenced programme of personal development that extends both through and beyond the taught curriculum. This programme makes a positive difference to all pupils and enables them to make sense of the world around them. The school also provides a comprehensive careers curriculum. This includes celebrating 'careers week' by inviting parents from a wide range of professions to inspire pupils.

Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the differences between people and cultures as well as the fundamental British values. They articulate clearly how these contribute to life in modern Britain. Pupils know the importance of respecting diversity. For example, pupils reflect on their beliefs, respect others' values and engage thoughtfully with ethical issues.

They learn about relationships and how to treat themselves and others with respect. Pupils develop their social skills through collaborative learning and active participation in school life. They take on a range of leadership roles, including peer mentors and roles on the school council and the 'green team'. These roles help to promote responsibility and active citizenship.

The school's broader enrichment programme, including trips, sport, the orchestra and a range of clubs such as Spanish club, are enjoyed by many, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders monitor the programme's impact and adapt it to meet pupils' needs. They take successful action to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can participate fully in the offer.

Leaders and staff have ensured that they are able to react to local issues as they arise, whether to raise awareness of, or promote, positive mental health. The school's pastoral support is responsive to any situation that happens during the school day. Pupils know how to access it and do so with confidence. Pupils learn to be reflective, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. Leaders and staff build positive partnerships with parents and carers through effective communication.

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

Pupils are well known, highly valued and positively challenged to 'let their light shine' as part of the community at St Margaret's. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is high. Pupils relish the time they spend learning, as well as social times with friends. They show great self-discipline and very high levels of respect for others. When pupils find it difficult to meet the school's very high expectations, staff provide the support they need to improve. Positive relationships contribute to a very welcoming and inclusive school culture, where pupils proactively look out for one another.

Achievement in assessments at the end of key stage 2 is very high. Pupils progress well through the curriculum, particularly in reading and mathematics. Teaching builds carefully on what pupils already know, helping them grasp more complex ideas. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from proactive help that enables them to access the full curriculum. Parents, carers and pupils appreciate the support that staff offer. Pupils are well prepared to move on to their next stage, with children in the early years being particularly ready for the ambition of key stage 1.

Pupils feel safe and cared for at school. They know which staff to speak with if they have any worries. Pupils speak to staff who listen to their concerns. They trust staff to resolve issues that arise. Staff take pupils' concerns seriously and bullying is rare.

The school provides a high-quality personal development programme. The programme supports pupils to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their community, including how to protect themselves online. Children in the early years have rich and impactful opportunities to understand themselves and the world around them. They develop a well-founded confidence and secure foundations for learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should further embed consistent teaching of the wider curriculum, with a focus on enabling pupils to produce high-quality work in all foundation subjects so that they achieve well.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Gianna Ulyatt.

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, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, governors, including the chair, a representative from the local authority, a representative from the diocese, parents and pupils during the inspection.

Inspectors confirmed the following inform

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Alice Hassall

Lead inspector:

Richard Wakefield, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Rowena Sykes, Ofsted Inspector

Rhian Williams, Ofsted Inspector

Jenny Parker, 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 17 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

402

Above 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

420

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)

3.23%

Well 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

1.00%

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

7.46%

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	82%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	85%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	60%	Above

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	94%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	95%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	95%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92%	73%	Above

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	86%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	85%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	84%	71%	Above

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	93%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	95%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	94%	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	73%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	44%	Above

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	93%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	86%	60%	Above

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	80%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	86%	58%	Above

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	87%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	59%	Close to average

‘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	73%	68%	6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	66%	5 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	93%	80%	14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	86%	78%	7 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	80%	78%	2 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	86%	77%	8 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	87%	80%	7 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	79%	-8 pp

'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)	3.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.8%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.8%	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)	3.2%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.0%	16.2%	Below

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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