

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Address: St Mark's Close, Bishopton Road West, Fairfield, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 7HA

Unique reference number (URN): 144551

Inspection report: 3 March 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 ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders have planned the early years provision carefully so that the curriculum and its delivery match children's stages of development. Guidance for children during child-initiated learning is thoughtful. It helps support children to learn independence readily. Early identification of children's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is prioritised. Children with SEND have their needs met through clear adaptations to the curriculum and well-targeted support. The impact of staff training on high-quality interactions is evident throughout the provision. Staff interact skilfully with children. Children are helped to develop their communication and language throughout the school day. In the 2-year-old provision, for example, children demonstrate advanced levels of language development when engaging in extended back-and-forth chatter.

The school ensures a seamless transition into the early years provision. Relationships are developed well. Parents and carers appreciate their access to staff and the early years provision as a whole. Many are of the view that their child is thriving.

The provision, both indoors and outdoors, is alive with stories, rhymes and songs. The school's phonics programme is delivered expertly. Children learn to read swiftly. Leaders evaluate the provision effectively and implement improvement initiatives expertly. Children are prepared very well for the demands of key stage 1.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

At this school, there is an embedded culture where pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. There is an ethos of belonging where pupils respect and understand others. Pupils acknowledge that staff provide and care for them well. For example, younger pupils can 'cuddle the capybara' when they are sad. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils known to social care, appreciate access to the counselling service the school provides.

The school has a highly effective personal, social and health education curriculum. Relationships and health education and online safety education equip pupils well to understand healthy relationships, body changes and online safety. Younger pupils know how to cross the road safely and understand healthy eating. Pupils are knowledgeable about fundamental British values. For example, pupils in key stage 1 explain the meaning of values such as the rule of law accurately and confidently. Other pupils speak with authority about the different make-up of families. Pupils have a clear understanding of equality and what it means to have a disability. They learn about Christianity and other world faiths such as Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Pupils value the opportunities in school to reflect and develop their own spirituality.

Many pupils attend the wide variety of after-school activities that include multi-skills sessions, science, cheerleading, coding, dodgeball and street dancing. Pupils take on roles of responsibility willingly, which builds confidence and develops their character. For example, pupils raised the funds for the installation of the climbing wall that is now in use. The sports crew design and deliver breaktime clubs and ensure resources are stored

properly. Reading ambassadors promote a love of reading in school, keep book spaces presentable, hold story time sessions on the playground and share book reviews.

Careers education is woven progressively throughout the curriculum and culminates in an 'aspirations day' and a careers week for pupils in Year 6.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, at the end of key stage 2, achieve increasingly well over time in English and mathematics. Most recently, the proportion that achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils, at the end of key stage 2, reach standards that are close to the national average. Pupils also achieve well in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

In key stages 1 and 2, there are recent improvements in pupils' letter and number formation. The vast majority of pupils are fluent readers on entry to Year 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care typically progress well across the curriculum from their starting points.

Leaders, quite correctly, have identified some learning gaps between current disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics. This means that some disadvantaged pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should. Closing these gaps is a key priority for the school.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school promotes the importance of regular attendance with pupils and their parents and carers. Leaders liaise productively with the local authority to improve attendance and reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' attendance initiatives have led to an increase in the number of pupils who attend school more regularly. Leaders' recent actions are leading to a reduction in the number of pupils who are late for school in the morning.

Generally, pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, have positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They behave well at the less-structured times of the school day. Staff are highly trained to manage pupils' behaviour and work in accordance with the school's policies. Strong relationships and effective teaching help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. Notably, there is a marked reduction in the use of unacceptable and discriminatory words used by pupils over time. Bullying is an unusual occurrence, and adults deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since formation, the new leadership team, in partnership with the trust, has revised the curriculum. This is broad, balanced and ambitious. The curriculum is implemented successfully and consistently across the school. It identifies precisely the knowledge and vocabulary pupils should learn. The content progresses seamlessly and sequentially between year groups, from the 2-year-olds in the early years to the oldest pupils in key stage 2. Staff have secure subject knowledge. For example, in design and technology, pupils' work and workbooks show clear stages in designing, making and evaluating at an age-appropriate level.

In lessons, teachers check on pupils' understanding and recall regularly. Pupils who need additional input are supported appropriately. Most receive the help they need to close any gaps in learning that exist. Staff make adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in line with their individual plans.

Leaders prioritise pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's provision for phonics and early reading is particularly effective. Disadvantaged pupils often receive additional one-to-one reading time with an adult, which helps them to become more confident and fluent readers. Leaders have implemented a new curriculum for writing. While staff are beginning to address gaps in pupils' skills in handwriting, leaders know there is more work to be done to ensure that pupils develop the important basic skills they need in writing.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders' provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Highly trained staff identify pupils' needs early on. They provide effectively for pupils' individual needs. Leaders work in partnership with a wide range of external professionals, such as occupational therapists, to ensure that pupils with SEND have their needs met well. Pupils' support plans are bespoke to their needs and are reviewed incisively. Staff receive helpful guidance on how to deliver the curriculum and adapt learning to meet pupils' individual needs. This, together with the staff's confident use of resources, ensures that pupils with SEND make steady progress against their individual targets. Pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, take an active part in life at school.

Despite this, the school is not as consistently successful with its use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. The school does not address the barriers to learning of these pupils quite as well as it does for pupils with SEND. For example, some disadvantaged pupils are late for school and frequently absent. Consequently, their learning and progress through the curriculum suffer. Leaders use alternative provision in the best interest of pupils.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, at all levels, have high ambitions for the pupils, the staff and the school. The school's leadership team evaluates accurately the school's strengths and areas that require

further development. The continuing professional development of staff has high priority at St Mark's. Leaders have successfully introduced new approaches to staff development across the school. Staff appreciate and act on the feedback they receive from their peers. This, along with the actions for school improvement, is having the desired impact. This is evident in the improvement in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2.

Trustees and members of the local advisory board fulfil their governance responsibilities effectively. Members of the local advisory board have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further development. They celebrate, for example, the strong outcomes in the early years and in early reading. They challenge leaders about the school's work, such as the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils and the impact of the 'golden ticket' scheme on pupils' attendance. Governors consider the workload and wellbeing of the headteacher, senior leaders and staff when new school improvement initiatives are introduced.

Leaders have ensured that St Mark's is a cohesive community of learning in which everyone is welcomed. Parents and carers are encouraged into school to be equal partners in their children's education.

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

Children, from the youngest 2-year-olds to the oldest 11-year-olds, enjoy attending this school. The school provides a nurturing environment for learning. All are welcome at this inclusive school. Children's individual needs are at its heart. Pupils who need help to manage their behaviour, including those who attend the specially resourced provision, are supported exceptionally well. They behave appropriately in lessons and at breaktimes. Rare instances of bullying are addressed immediately and sensitively.

The school has high expectations of pupils both socially and academically. The youngest children get off to a great start in the early years. Overall, pupils' academic outcomes are improving. However, some pupils are late for school in the morning. These pupils miss out on important teaching. Consequently, they do not make the progress they should through the curriculum.

The school's curriculum is enriched by educational visits, such as the Year 6 residential visit to London. Pupils benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular clubs. They take an active part in school leadership through the pupil parliament, the prefect system and the 'eco-warriors' club. Pupils also enjoy socialising together. The 2 silent discos were a particular hit with the pupils during the inspection. School life is enhanced by the extensive involvement of parents and carers. Large numbers attend consultation meetings, reading workshops and breakfasts, phonics sessions, coffee mornings, church-linked celebrations and pupils' performances. Parents appreciate all that the school does. Many are of the view that 'there is a strong sense of community'.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their current and successful actions to improve pupils' punctuality and attendance continue with rigour.
 - Leaders should continue to embed strategies to improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils through the curriculum.
 - Leaders should embed their current improvement actions to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills in writing are identified and closed quickly.
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About this inspection

This school is part of One Excellence Multi 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), Lindsey Vollans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Cunningham.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair and a member of the local advisory board, the trust's CEO and the chair of trustees. The lead inspector also spoke to the school's improvement partner and the director of education for the diocese.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2025.

The school includes provision for 6 pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs in its specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

A new headteacher has taken up post since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Stacey Rand

Lead inspector:

Belita Scott, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:


Natalie Fountain, Ofsted Inspector

Debbie Redshaw, Ofsted Inspector

Gemma Jeynes, 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 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

430

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)

19.21%

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

3.95%

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

10.47%

Below 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health

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 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	65%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	74%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	66%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	57%	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	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	85%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	74%	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	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	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 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	49%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	43%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	57%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	40%	44%	Close to average

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	65%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	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	60%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	43%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	40%	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	60%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	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 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	49%	68%	-19 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	67%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	66%	-26 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	65%	80%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	71%	80%	-8 pp
2022/23 (final)	60%	78%	-18 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	60%	78%	-17 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	78%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	78%	3 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	77%	-37 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	60%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	53%	79%	-26 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 (2 term)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.2%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.1%	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 (2 term)	15.2%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	20.0%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.8%	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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