

# Ward Jackson Church of England Primary School

Address: Clark Street, TS24 7LE

Unique reference number (URN): 149661

## Inspection report: 13 January 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 ●

Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture in which pupils are known, valued and supported to thrive. Leaders are rightly very proud of this. Pupils' individual needs are identified quickly and accurately, including those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or those who are known or previously known to children's social care. Staff draw highly effectively on assessment information, close relationships with families and advice from external professionals to shape timely and well-targeted support.

Leaders strategically deploy pupil premium funding and other additional funding to consistently reduce barriers to learning and wellbeing, for example through bespoke interventions, speech and language programmes, family support and improved access to enrichment opportunities.

Reasonable adjustments and adaptations are embedded across the school, ensuring that ambition is maintained while enabling all pupils to access the full curriculum. Communication and language development underpin learning. Staff are well trained in the school's approach to SEND, enabling them to adjust provision swiftly when pupils experience any difficulty. Leaders maintain close oversight of pupils' progress, using regular reviews to evaluate the impact of interventions and refine support. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and independence, engage positively with learning and achieve well from their starting points.

### Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have developed a coherent, ambitious and highly inclusive personal development programme that is integral to the school's work and strongly supports pupils' wider development. From the early years onwards, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own opinions and experiences, to understand right and wrong, and to respect the values and differences of others. Through a carefully planned and age-appropriate relationships and sex education and health education curriculum, pupils show detailed knowledge about, for example, how to form healthy relationships, manage their emotions and keep themselves safe online and offline. Pupils talk confidently about equality, kindness and fairness, demonstrating a secure understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law.

The personal development and wellbeing programme is highly effective in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, including those known to children's social care. Leaders remove barriers to participation by funding visits, providing transport and adapting experiences so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, can take part fully. As a result, pupils feel valued and develop confidence, resilience and independence. Strong pastoral care underpins this work. Staff know pupils extremely well. They model empathy and tolerance in daily interactions and provide tailored emotional support where needed.

The school's enrichment offer is varied, purposeful and closely aligned to the curriculum. The 'Ward Jackson Experience' ensures that pupils benefit from high-quality cultural, artistic

and sporting opportunities, including visits to theatres, the seaside, restaurants and universities. There is also participation in music, choir and residential experiences. These opportunities broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world and raise aspirations. Pupils are also encouraged to contribute positively to society through fundraising, volunteering and leadership roles, such as school councillors. Consequently, pupils are helped to develop character, social responsibility and a clear sense of belonging, and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain and their next stages of education.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

### Expected standard

Pupils make steady progress through the curriculum. Leaders track progress carefully and ensure that pupils who need additional support receive timely, focused teaching that builds confidence and knowledge. As a result, pupils develop secure skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Published outcomes for the phonics screening check in Year 1 vary and reflect that some pupils enter the school with very low starting points. Pupils who do not initially meet the expected phonics standard catch up, and many pupils read accurately by the end of key stage 1.

By the end of key stage 2, published outcomes show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages, with disadvantaged pupils achieving in line with or above their peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well through the curriculum, supported by effective adaptations. Although outcomes at the key stage 2 higher standard in English and mathematics are not as positive as leaders aspire to, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

### Attendance and behaviour

### Expected standard

Leaders place sustained emphasis on improving attendance and understand its importance in securing pupils' learning and wellbeing. They analyse attendance information carefully to identify patterns and act when concerns emerge. Leaders work closely with families to remove barriers to regular attendance, using clear communication and family-centred support to build trust and shared responsibility. This approach has been effective in addressing historically low attendance for some pupils. Overall attendance is rising. Leaders remain ambitious and continue to refine their strategies to secure further improvement for all groups of pupils.

Leaders have established a calm, orderly and respectful environment in which pupils understand routines. There are very high expectations for behaviour. Pupils meet these. Pupils are involved in developing their own rules and behaviour expectations for their classrooms. This helps to ensure that they take their behaviour and responsibilities to others seriously, and demonstrates pupils' clear understanding of what positive behaviour looks like. Well-planned pastoral support helps pupils to manage emotions and reduce anxiety. As

a result, behaviour around the school and in lessons is very positive. Pupils are attentive, engaged and show enthusiasm in their learning. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated, and any concerns are addressed swiftly and effectively. Strong relationships ensure that pupils feel safe, valued and well cared for.

## **Curriculum and teaching**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders have a secure and accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school and use this insight to make informed decisions about refinement and improvement. They have constructed an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. It is carefully sequenced from the early years to the end of key stage 2 and ensures that pupils build knowledge logically so that they are well prepared for their next steps.

Reading, writing, spelling and mathematics are prioritised, with an emphasis on communication, language and vocabulary development. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and supported, particularly in early reading and phonics, so that teachers have the subject knowledge needed to implement the curriculum effectively. Well-matched resources and regular professional development enable teachers to build on pupils' prior learning and address misconceptions.

Leaders and staff know pupils well and adapt teaching appropriately, including for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face barriers to learning. Timely interventions help pupils who fall behind to catch up. Teaching is effective in securing essential knowledge across the curriculum. However, occasionally, teaching is not consistently effective to ensure that learning tasks sufficiently deepen and extend pupils' knowledge, particularly for pupils who are capable of working at a high standard.

## **Early years**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders and staff share a clear vision for high-quality education and care in the early years, ensuring that children make a positive start to school and are prepared for the next stage of learning. Some children enter the early years with barriers to learning, particularly in communication and language and physical readiness for learning. The well-sequenced curriculum places a clear emphasis on developing vocabulary, listening and speaking skills so that these gaps are typically addressed. Staff interactions with children are central to this approach, and these are typically of a high quality.

Staff form warm, trusting relationships with children and help them to settle quickly. Through thoughtfully planned learning activities, children develop confidence in communicating, for example when volunteering to answer questions and joining in with sounding out letters. Reading is prioritised from the outset. In Reception, children learn phonics systematically and begin to apply their knowledge with increasing confidence to early reading and writing. Most children achieve well and are ready for transition into Year 1. Leaders track children's progress closely and adapt provision to meet individual needs. Through regular

communication with parents and carers, the school works in partnership with families to support children's learning and development.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They place pupils' best interests at the centre of all decision-making, ensuring that actions benefit disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those known or previously known to children's social care. Leaders have prioritised key areas for development, such as early reading, mathematics fluency and developing thinking skills, and their work shows positive impact. Leaders ensure that the school is inclusive and that policies and practices enable pupils with vulnerabilities to belong, feel safe and enjoy school.

The trust and local academy council provide effective oversight. They hold leaders to account while offering support, challenge and expertise, ensuring that resources, including pupil premium funding, are used strategically to improve outcomes for all pupils.

Leaders ensure that all staff, including early career teachers and trainees, have access to high-quality professional learning that develops expertise and improves practice across the school. Staff report high levels of support and morale, reflecting leaders' attention to workload and wellbeing. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive, valuing the care, education and inclusive culture the school provides. They recognise the school's commitment to ensuring all pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

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

This is a small school with love and care at the centre of it. The school is warm and welcoming. It is an inclusive community where pupils feel safe, valued and confident to be themselves. From the early years, children quickly settle into routines, develop social skills and begin to cooperate and collaborate effectively with their peers. Staff take time to understand each pupil's individual strengths, needs and interests. They ensure that barriers to learning are reduced through tailored resources, learning adaptations and pastoral support. This personalised approach helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, to engage with the curriculum and make progress from their starting points.

Pupils enjoy learning and approach lessons with enthusiasm. They engage eagerly in a wide range of experiences, from collective worship, to dance, to engaging in debate. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised, enabling pupils to achieve in line with national expectations and prepare for their next steps, including transition to secondary school. Pupils take pride in their school. They demonstrate positive attitudes, focus and resilience in lessons, demonstrating that learning is purposeful and enjoyable.

The school fosters a great sense of belonging. Pupils have positive relationships with staff and peers, enjoy collaborative play and participate fully in school life. Leadership opportunities, such as being part of the school and worship councils or being community caretakers, help pupils to develop responsibility and confidence. Clubs, sports, music, trips and family learning events broaden pupils' horizons, while pastoral support ensures that any concerns are addressed swiftly and effectively. Pupils learn the values of respect, kindness and inclusion and leave the school well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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## Next steps

- The school should ensure that the curriculum and teaching are consistently adapted so that more pupils deepen their subject knowledge and apply their knowledge and skills to increasingly complex tasks.
  - Leaders should continue their work to secure consistently high attendance for pupils.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Learning 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), Paul Rickeard, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Taylor.

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 CEO of the trust and the chair of the board of directors of the trust during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with representatives from the diocese and the academy council.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last Section 48 inspection of the school was in December 2017.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Amy Sparkes

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### Lead inspector:

Jessica McKay, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspector:

Helen Haunch, 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 13 January 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**98**

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

**175**

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)

**70.24%**

Well above 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

**5.10%**

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

**38.78%**

## Well 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 above 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		61%	
2024/25	70%	62%	Close to average
2023/24	38%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

### Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of 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>		74%	
<b>2024/25</b>	100%	75%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	57%	74%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		73%	

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		72%	
<b>2024/25</b>	70%	72%	Close to average
<b>2023/24</b>	62%	72%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		71%	

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		73%	
<b>2024/25</b>	80%	74%	Close to average
<b>2023/24</b>	48%	73%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		73%	

### **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
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		46%	
<b>2024/25</b>	67%	47%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	23%	46%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		44%	

### 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
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		62%	
<b>2024/25</b>	100%	63%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	46%	62%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		60%	

### 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
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		59%	
<b>2024/25</b>	67%	59%	Close to average
<b>2023/24</b>	46%	58%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		58%	

### 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
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		60%	
<b>2024/25</b>	78%	61%	Above
<b>2023/24</b>	31%	59%	Below
<b>2022/23</b>		59%	

### 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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National non-disadvantaged score</b>	<b>School disadvantage gap</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		68%	
<b>2024/25</b>	67%	69%	-3 pp
<b>2023/24</b>	23%	67%	-44 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		66%	

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

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National non-disadvantaged score</b>	<b>School disadvantage gap</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		80%	
<b>2024/25</b>	100%	81%	19 pp
<b>2023/24</b>	46%	80%	-34 pp
<b>2022/23</b>		78%	

### **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.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National non-disadvantaged score</b>	<b>School disadvantage gap</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		78%	
<b>2024/25</b>	67%	78%	-12 pp
<b>2023/24</b>	46%	78%	-31 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		77%	

### 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	78%	81%	-3 pp
2023/24	31%	79%	-49 pp
2022/23		79%	

## 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 terms)	7.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24	7.3%	5.5%	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 terms)	23.5%	13.3%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	20.2%	14.6%	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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