

St Bridget's CofE School

Address: Main Street, Parton, St Bridget's Ce School, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 6NY

Unique reference number (URN): 112296

Inspection report: 12 May 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 make astute decisions about how to deliver the early years curriculum so that it is of a consistently high quality. For example, leaders have meticulously planned how to provide children with high quality learning outdoors where there is no direct access to this from the classroom. The early years curriculum sets out clearly what children should learn. There is a particular focus on developing children's early communication skills. Children have positive relationships with the caring staff who meet their welfare needs consistently well.

Staff are vigilant at promptly identifying and meeting children's needs. When necessary, staff swiftly implement bespoke support and carefully adapt provision. Leaders engage with specialists and with parents and carers to ensure that any support is the most effective it can be for each child. Staff have detailed knowledge of each child's next steps. They focus their teaching sharply on promoting these next steps. For example, staff explain new concepts clearly to children and design highly effective activities that enable children to practise new learning. Staff consistently use highly effective interactions with children to ensure that they remain actively engaged in learning. Children develop high levels of confidence and independence. They sustain their concentration for long periods of time as they become absorbed in activities. Children, including those who have gaps in their knowledge and skills when they join the school, make rapid progress. They are very well prepared for learning in Year 1.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils generally achieve well and make suitable progress through the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs, those who are disadvantaged and those who join the school at later points. Staff ensure that pupils secure the important early skills they need in reading, writing, mathematics. Children in the early years rapidly gain confidence in using phonics to accurately read and write sentences. Pupils develop fluency in multiplication by the end of Year 4. Pupils' books show that they build a broad body of knowledge over time. By the end of Year 6, pupils, typically, have secured the knowledge they need for starting secondary school. This is not always reflected in nationally published outcome at the end of Key stage 2. This is due to the small numbers of pupils in each cohort, which means that comparisons between years and against national averages are less secure.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Leaders have a precise understanding of the challenges that impact pupils' attendance. Leaders work in close partnership with pupils and their families to promote regular attendance and to overcome any challenges to this. Leaders also ensure that families

understand the impact that persistent absence and holidays taken in term time have on pupils' learning. Staff and leaders have prioritised improving attendance, with great success. Absences have reduced year on year, resulting in current attendance rates being higher than the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders ensure that there are clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. They, along with the staff, support pupils to follow the school's rules and routines. Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise to appropriately, and positively, manage pupils' behaviour. This includes bespoke support for pupils who struggle to understand, or to manage, their emotions. Pupils are respectful towards others and work hard in lessons. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils understand that everyone should be treated with kindness and respect. Bullying and any form of discrimination is rare. If incidents occur, leaders take swift and effective action to address their concerns.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have a clear view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They carefully consider how to continue to improve it over time. For example, recent developments in the curriculum have strengthened the teaching of spoken language and handwriting. Leaders have designed a rich curriculum that sets out clearly what pupils should learn at each stage, including in mixed-age classes. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is informed by the local context. For example, pupils have opportunities to visit Hadrian's wall to support their learning in history.

Teachers are knowledgeable and deliver the curriculum well. They provide bespoke support to pupils to reduce barriers that they face in their learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff sequence lessons carefully, so that pupils can build knowledge in a logical order. However, staff do not consistently ensure that pupils deepen their understanding through making explicit connections between new learning and what they have already learned in previous years.

Teachers are vigilant at checking that pupils secure the important skills they need, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, teachers routinely pick up errors in pupils' spellings and calculations and support them to close gaps in understanding that they may have.

Inclusion

Expected standard ●

Leaders and staff know pupils well. They understand pupils' individual needs and provide a range of support to ensure these needs are met. For example, leaders are aware that some pupils face challenges that impact their wellbeing. Leaders provide these pupils with well-considered pastoral support that helps them to feel happy, confident and secure in school. Leaders use additional funding effectively to help pupils with their learning and personal development. They check that this is having the impact that they intend and make adaptations where needed.

Leaders communicate effectively with external specialists and follow their advice when supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff deliver

specific learning programmes which help pupils to make progress in aspects of the curriculum that they are finding difficult. Teachers make effective adaptations to lessons to support pupils to be successful in accessing learning. For example, pupils use technology and resources to reduce the barriers they face in demonstrating their understanding. However, at times, the targets set for some pupils with SEND are too broad. This makes it difficult for staff to maintain a consistently sharp focus on closing pupils' gaps in understanding and support pupils to achieve more highly.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors have a clear, shared vision for the school. They ensure that this vision is central to decisions they make about the curriculum, teaching and the broader experiences offered to pupils. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the school's provision. This informs their decisions about what they need to do to continue to improve the school. For example, leaders identified that they needed to develop the curriculum to ensure that there is sufficient focus on spoken language skills. Leaders therefore built staff knowledge and expertise in this area. As a result, this work has had a positive impact on pupils' language and communication.

Staff are highly positive about the leadership of the school. They are clear that leaders' make conscious decisions to support them with their workload and wellbeing. Leaders help staff to build their expertise through a range of professional development opportunities. This includes accessing external training linked to their roles and collaborating with other local schools to share positive practice.

Governors know the school and the local community well. They understand their roles and ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities. Governors provide appropriate support and strategic challenge to leaders.

Leaders and staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and with external professionals in the best interests of pupils. Parents value the communication that they receive from school about their children's achievements, both academic and personal. This helps to ensure continuity of support for pupils between school and home.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils' personal development is promoted well. They provide a wealth of pastoral help to pupils to support their wellbeing. Pupils develop their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This includes online safety and awareness of risks pertinent to the local area, such as safety near open water and the railway.

Pupils develop a mature understanding of building respectful, positive relationships with others. They understand that everybody is unique. Leaders ensure that, through visits and visitors to the school, pupils broaden their knowledge of diversity and develop their cultural awareness. Pupils are clear that everyone is welcome at their school and that no one should be discriminated against.

Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to take part in external sports events and debating activities with pupils from other schools. These experiences develop pupils' talents, social

skills and confidence. Pupils also participate in a range of visits to places that contrast with their local area. Leaders carefully consider how to maximise the experiences that pupils can encounter in each visit. For example, pupils have opportunities to sing in large venues, to watch theatre productions and to visit museums. Pupils also have the chance to work with local businesses on projects to develop their understanding of managing finances. Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils have equal access to these opportunities. They make adaptations to enable all pupils to take part.

Pupils learn about important British values. They know, for example, that laws 'help to keep people safe', and that voting 'makes sure everyone has a fair chance to give their views'. Pupils develop leadership skills and learn about the positive impact they can have in school and beyond. For example, through their roles as 'beacons', pupils help their younger peers at lunchtimes. Pupils also participate in litter picking on the beach and fundraising for local and national charities.

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

Pupils cherish the friendships they build at this small, welcoming school. They are courteous and kind to each other. Pupils of different ages enjoy chatting and playing together at social times. They support each other, behave well and endeavour to demonstrate the school's Christian values. Any rare incidents of bullying or discrimination are taken seriously by staff and resolved quickly. Staff build highly positive relationships with children in the early years right from when they join the school. This helps children to feel safe and secure from the start. This continues in Years 1 to 6, where pupils are confident that staff will support them if they face emotional challenges in their lives.

Pupils benefit from learning in a calm, focused environment. They enjoy encountering new experiences and learning new things. They say this makes coming to school 'always worth it, every day'. This is reflected in pupils' rates of attendance, which have improved in recent years and are now above the national average. Pupils learn a broad curriculum. They typically achieve well and are well prepared for their next steps in education. This starts in the early years, where children get off to a flying start to school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who face difficulties in their lives, receive a range of pastoral and learning support. This ensures that pupils' needs are met, enabling them to build their confidence and to flourish.

Pupils enjoy attending a range of extra-curricular activities. They have the opportunity to play sports such as judo and rugby, as well as learning to play musical instruments and participating in outdoor learning on the beach. Pupils also broaden their experiences through visits to places that contrast with their local area. This includes trips to cities, such as Manchester and Edinburgh. Leaders ensure that all pupils can participate fully in these opportunities.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen the targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that the curriculum can be consistently well matched to pupils' next steps and enables them to achieve more highly.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching enables pupils to make clear links between prior and new learning so that they deepen their understanding and develop detailed knowledge across the curriculum.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Eliza Treme Swailes.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, staff, governors, and representatives of the local authority and the diocese during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Carlisle. Its last section 48 inspection was in May 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Ruth Colley

Lead inspector:

Liz Dayton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Gillian Burrow, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

77

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

99

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

29.41%

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

3.90%

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

27.27%

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

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	50%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	46%	60%	Below

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	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	88%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	55%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	66%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	88%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	23%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	46%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	31%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average

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	54%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	83%	59%	Above

‘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	23%	68%	-45 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	66%	-33 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	46%	80%	-33 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	78%	-12 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	31%	78%	-47 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 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	54%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	83%	79%	4 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 (3 term)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.5%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	11.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	18.0%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	21.3%	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.

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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