

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wrightington

Address: Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington, Wigan, Lancashire, WN6 9RE

Unique reference number (URN): 119696

Inspection report: 19 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Attendance is improving. It is broadly in line with schools nationally. Leaders follow up absences and work closely with families where attendance is a concern. Where pupils find coming to school difficult, leaders put support in place to help them. For example, new pupils receive a special teddy and a personal welcome. For pupils who find the transition into school particularly hard, leaders build in extra time and provide a familiar face to help them feel safe. Leaders monitor attendance closely, identify patterns and act swiftly where persistent absence occurs. They work with each family individually to remove barriers so that pupils' attendance begins to improve.

Leaders celebrate good manners. They set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and polite. Pupils enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes together and settle well into their activities. They show positive attitudes to their learning. Where pupils need extra help managing their feelings, staff support them with care and skill. The school does not tolerate bullying, discrimination or harassment. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that adults sort out any problems fairly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in early years are happy, safe and settled. Staff build warm relationships with children and work closely with families to identify and meet every child's needs. They prioritise children's personal, social and emotional development well. As a result, children grow in confidence. They increasingly develop independence and form positive relationships with one another.

Leaders design the early years curriculum carefully. They plan it around key texts, poems and rhymes. Communication and language sit at the heart of everything. Staff typically support children well to develop their communication skills. They encourage children to use new words and speak in full sentences. Staff model language and ask questions that help children to think. Children learn phonics each day. Most build the sounds they need, though some do not yet read with accuracy. Staff make careful checks to find out what children know and can do and use this to plan next steps in learning.

Children benefit from experienced and caring staff who know them well. Learning builds across the 7 areas towards the early learning goals. Leaders build relationships with parents and carers from the start and keep them involved in their children's learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils at St Joseph's are proud of their school and its values that shape their daily life. They make meaningful contributions to their school and the wider community. For example, they raise money for those in need and talk with enthusiasm about the difference they make. Leaders invite families into school regularly for a range of events. This strengthens the bond between home and school.

Leaders shape pupils' personal development through a well-designed curriculum. They make sure that learning builds carefully as pupils move through the school. Leaders engage well with parents and carers so they understand what pupils will be taught. From an early age, pupils learn how to stay safe, both online and offline. They learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. Pupils speak confidently about healthy lifestyles. They learn about different backgrounds, beliefs and identities and talk with maturity about the importance of respecting others. Leaders are working to strengthen pupils' understanding of fundamental British values.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities. They take part in outdoor learning, running club, dance and choir. Older pupils visit the Houses of Parliament and go on other trips that broaden their horizons. Pupils take on meaningful leadership roles as digital leaders, playground leaders and members of the pupil parliament. Staff know pupils well and provide caring, personalised support. Leaders plan the transition to secondary school carefully and put extra help in place for pupils who need it. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included. Leaders keep a close eye on participation to make sure that no one is left out.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

While leaders are ambitious for pupils to achieve well, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could, particularly in national assessments. Gaps in pupils' knowledge in grammar, punctuation and spelling hamper their ability to write with accuracy and apply their knowledge across the curriculum. Pupils with high prior attainment, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders are determined that pupils leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education. Their actions are beginning to make a positive difference. At the end of Year 6, more pupils are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. Early reading is improving. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well to access the same opportunities as their peers.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Teaching quality differs across the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is variable. Sometimes they set learning activities that are too easy. The checks that teachers make do not ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are consistently addressed. As a result, pupils repeat errors over time, such as in letter formation, spelling and punctuation. Variability in teaching has the greatest impact on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who do not always get the help they need. Leaders are now focusing on securing pupils' writing and spelling skills, but this work is at an early stage.

Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to take account of mixed-age classes. They ensure that learning builds carefully on what pupils already know. At the start of each topic, teachers find out what pupils remember from before and use this to plan next steps. Leaders have

invested in improving the teaching of reading and mathematics. This is beginning to make a difference for some pupils.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

At times, leaders do not identify pupils' needs accurately. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in the way some teachers match learning activities to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not receive the support they need. This hampers the progress they make through the curriculum.

Where leaders know pupils' needs well, they work with specialists, such as speech and language therapists, and families to make sure that staff have the right strategies to adapt the curriculum successfully for pupils with SEND. Leaders regularly review the support that pupils with SEND receive so that it is matched closely to their needs.

Leaders maintain appropriate relationships with the local authority for pupils known, or previously known, to social care. They commission alternative provision in pupils' best interests and check on their welfare and progress. Leaders use additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access enrichment experiences alongside their peers, including residential visits.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The school has been through a period of significant change, including in its leadership. Leaders have welcomed the support from the local authority and the diocese. Leaders have a broad understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. However, the demands on senior leaders are high, and their capacity is stretched. This has made it harder for leaders to understand why the quality of teaching varies and to act on their priorities. As a result, weaker teaching has not improved quickly or consistently enough, and some pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Governors are committed to the school and know some of its priorities. However, they do not have a clear enough understanding of some areas of its work. They do not always provide effective challenge to leaders or hold leaders to account closely enough. Governors have begun to consider the workload and wellbeing of senior leaders, but they have more to do.

Leaders care about their staff and consider their workload and wellbeing. They have invested in training for staff. Leaders are working to make sure that training improves the quality of teaching and learning across all classes. Staff feel well supported and value working at the school. Parents and carers are positive about the school. They value being involved in school life.

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

Pupils know they are valued and belong at this school. The school's values shape their daily life. Pupils are encouraged to reflect and take part in acts of charity. They describe their school as welcoming, calm and kind. Pupils enjoy warm, caring relationships with staff and feel confident that staff know them well and will help if they have a worry. Pupils feel safe at school. They play happily together and look after one another. Bullying is rare. Any incidents are dealt with effectively.

Pupils enjoy their learning and talk eagerly about what they are doing. Too few, however, achieve as well as they could. Some pupils' gaps in important basic knowledge, including in writing and spelling, hold them back. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make the progress they could. Some of the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to deepen and extend their learning.

Children in the early years are happy and settled. They make a secure start to their education. Staff prioritise learning to read from the start. Pupils are beginning to benefit from daily phonics teaching. Leaders are working to make sure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities and experiences that broaden their horizons. They take on meaningful roles and responsibilities and contribute to the life of their school and community. Pupils speak confidently about how to look after their physical and mental health. They treat others with kindness and respect. Leaders identify barriers early and put targeted support in place. No pupil misses out because of their background or circumstances. Pupils' attendance is improving as leaders work closely with families to remove the barriers that prevent pupils attending school regularly.

Next steps

- Leaders should identify and address the reasons why the quality of teaching varies across the school and act quickly to improve consistency in teaching.
 - Leaders should make sure that the curriculum is matched appropriately to pupils' age and stage, including for Reception-age children in the mixed-age class and higher attaining pupils, so that pupils build knowledge securely over time and achieve as well as they should.
 - Leaders should target support precisely to pupils' needs, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that barriers to learning are reduced.
 - Leaders should identify promptly the pupils who have not secured basic knowledge and skills and provide effective support to close those gaps quickly.
 - Governors should deepen their understanding of the school's work so that they provide effective support and challenge.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors is Conor Davis.

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

Following the 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.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with leaders, a representative of the local authority, a representative of the diocese, the school improvement partner, governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also received feedback from parents and carers and spoke with providers of alternative provision.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection was in November 2025.

The school also runs a pre-school under the same registration, with 17 children attending.

The school currently makes use of 3 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Vicki Gleeson

Lead inspector:

Dianne Holcroft, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Sharon Cowey, 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 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

79

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

140

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)

5.13%

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

8.86%

Well 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

11.39%

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	59%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	65%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	58%	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	73%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
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	76%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	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	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	58%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

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		62%	
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	

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

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 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘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)	5.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.3%	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 (3 term)	13.3%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.7%	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.

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