

Ashton Hayes Primary School

Address: Church Road, Ashton Hayes, Chester, Cheshire, CH3 8AB

Unique reference number (URN): 111109

Inspection report: 15 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have meticulous oversight of pupils' behaviour and attendance. They use their thorough knowledge of pupils to provide the right support where it is needed. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of this work and a major key to its success. Pupils' behaviour is highly positive. They are respectful to one another, to staff and to visitors. They display high levels of responsibility and awareness of the needs of others. When pupils find it more difficult to manage their emotions or behaviour, leaders take a personalised approach to make sure that their learning or the learning of others is not disrupted. Rules and routines are well established throughout the school, with pupils taking care to follow them consistently well. Bullying and unkind behaviour are rare and dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils' attendance rates are consistently above the national average. This is also true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Pupils attend regularly because they are proud to be part of the school community. Leaders carefully monitor attendance and act quickly to remove any barriers that might be preventing pupils from being in school each day. They work closely with parents and carers to keep absence levels low. Leaders ensure that the importance of regular attendance is shared among the whole school community.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders have had a considerable impact on improving the provision in the early years. The curriculum and environment have been overhauled to better meet children's needs and the context in which they live. This work has been completed with children's absolute best interests at the core. Leaders take the time and care to get to know children well before they start at the school. This means that they can provide the best education and care from day one. Leaders ensure that the activities and materials provided for children match their learning and development needs well. Children learn through activities that interest and engage them. Leaders delicately balance following children's interests with being clear about what important knowledge they will build. This helps children to be confident and curious learners. Staff interact with children purposefully, extending their vocabulary as well as their speaking and listening skills.

Leaders take care to identify any additional needs or concerns as early as possible. Teachers skilfully adapt teaching to help children to achieve very well across the 7 areas of learning. Children secure the important knowledge that they need in reading, writing and number. For example, children's work in their writing books shows how they write with increasing accuracy. They gain secure phonics knowledge. Children quickly adapt to well-established routines. Despite only being in school for a short amount of time, they live up to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour. Children are extremely happy, safe and secure. Warm relationships feature across the setting. Staff balance children's emotional development with their academic learning. This prepares them very well for the curriculum in Year 1.

Ashton Hayes prides itself on ensuring that everyone is welcome. Leaders' work to strengthen their systems for identifying and addressing pupils' needs has been very successful. Leaders and staff know pupils incredibly well. They use this knowledge insightfully to swiftly spot the barriers that may be hindering pupils' learning or wellbeing. Helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to thrive sits at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, leaders and staff make sure that pupils' needs are met fully, regardless of their difficulties or starting points.

A key feature of leaders' success is the highly personalised approach that they take to supporting pupils and their families. This ensures that the strategies to remove the obstacles that hamper pupils' achievement are tailored to each individual pupil. For example, teachers carefully adapt how they teach so that everyone can access the curriculum. Other pupils benefit from small-group work to help with learning or individualised support to manage their emotions.

Leaders ensure that staff receive the support, guidance and training that they need to help pupils with SEND or other barriers to learning. Leaders meticulously track pupils' progress towards their individual goals. When necessary, they make careful adaptations so that each pupil can flourish.

Leaders use the additional funding from the pupil premium grant to make sure that disadvantaged pupils have an equal chance to achieve well and participate fully in all that is on offer.

Expected standard

The 2025 published data indicates that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below or close to the national average. Pupils fared less well in writing. Weaknesses in the previous curriculum meant that some pupils did not achieve as well as they should.

The revamped curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are quickly gaining the essential knowledge that they need to succeed. They read fluently and with understanding. Across each class, pupils write accurately and apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Their knowledge in other subjects is also improving. They can mostly remember what they have been taught and they are beginning to link their prior learning to new concepts. They generally produce high-quality work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who face other barriers to learning achieve well from their starting points. Overall, pupils are making better progress through the curriculum than was the case previously. They are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and the way in which it is taught. This has led to some recent marked improvements. The refreshed curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that pupils gain the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve well. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils who are taught in mixed-age classes. There is a much sharper focus on teaching important reading, writing and mathematics knowledge, including phonics, from the start of the early years through to Year 6. However, some of this work is still relatively new. As a result, it has not had time to impact fully on pupils' achievement across all subjects.

The curriculum is typically taught well. Teachers skilfully engage pupils in meaningful learning activities. They mostly check what pupils have remembered and use this information to correct mistakes and misconceptions. Teachers are well informed about pupils' differing needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work creatively with leaders to adapt learning tasks so that pupils with barriers to learning can access the curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders' insightful understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses mean that priorities are accurate and precise. Leaders are strategic in their approach to planning improvement activities. The impact of this work is evident throughout the school. Leaders take the right actions at the right time and at the right pace to ensure that staff embody their vision for excellence. Leaders carefully monitor any new initiatives to ensure that they are making a difference.

Leaders balance their high expectations for staff with care and consideration for their workload and wellbeing. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the way in which considerable change has been managed. They have trust and confidence in the strategies to support them to help pupils to thrive. They appreciate the professional development that they receive to refresh and consolidate their teaching skills. Subject leaders are buoyant about their roles and the opportunities that they have to improve the curriculum. Teamwork abounds across this tight-knit staff team.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school and its context. They are aspirational for the pupils and ensure that resources, including any additional funding, are carefully deployed to help them thrive. Governors provide helpful challenge and support.

Leaders and governors are proud of all that has been achieved in a relatively short period of time. However, they are not complacent in wanting the best for pupils both in their learning and wider development.

Relationships with parents and carers are supportive and respectful. Parents feel listened to and say that any issues are quickly resolved. Many feel that this school is a truly special place where leaders and staff genuinely know each child as an individual.

Leaders have established a broad and balanced programme to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. The updated curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education ensures that pupils are fully equipped for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. Pupils benefit from a wide range of additional experiences to enhance their understanding of keeping safe, such as visits from the emergency services.

Leaders carefully design a range of opportunities to broaden pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils know that they should treat others equally despite any differences. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to teaching pupils about fundamental British values and the differences that exist between people in modern Britain. 'The Ashton Question' gives pupils the opportunity to think carefully about diversity and equality. However, this work is in its infancy. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders have introduced an appropriate curriculum for relationships and sex education and health education so that pupils are learning about how to stay healthy and maintain positive relationships now and as they grow older.

Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities which enhance their learning and extend their interests and talents. They enjoy taking part in sport, writing to their Spanish pen pals and singing activities. They are especially proud of the end of year show. Leaders ensure that pupils find out about the world beyond their small village school. For example, they visit the theatre and museums and learn about other faiths and cultures. Leaders carefully track participation rates to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make the most of this rich offer.

Leaders have established opportunities for pupils to develop as leaders in the school and wider community. Pupils take great pride in their work to raise money for charities while older pupils relish their role as buddies to children in the early years. Such experiences enable pupils to build a sense of responsibility and teamwork.

Leaders place great importance on their pastoral support offer. They have ensured that there are trusted and well-trained staff on hand to help if pupils or their families are facing challenges.

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

Children get off to a flying start in the early years and enjoy their time at school. The enticing curriculum means that they enter Year 1 with a secure foundation for future success.

Pupils arrive at school each day happy and ready to learn. They are greeted warmly by staff who know them well. Pupils benefit from wonderful relationships with staff, who take the time to know them as individuals. They develop confidence and a sense of belonging. Pupils talk positively about the wide range of opportunities and experiences that they take part in,

including enrichment activities that broaden their cultural knowledge, such as theatre performances, sporting events and trips.

Pupils feel safe in school. They learn and understand how to keep themselves safe, including online, and know that there are trusted staff they can speak to if they need help. Staff deal with any incidents or concerns about unkind behaviour or bullying swiftly and effectively. They understand that all people are different and show high levels of tolerance and respect for one another.

Pupils behave very well. They strive to be kind and thoughtful. They take care of each other and work and play together in harmony. They are proud that their school makes everyone feel welcome and included. Pupils' attendance rates are consistently high, and they arrive at school on time.

The recently refreshed curriculum is helping pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that they need. Pupils typically achieve well. They are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing receive highly personalised support. Their needs are met very well so that they thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed the recently refreshed curriculum so that teaching enables pupils to achieve consistently well across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should embed and further develop the programme to support pupils' personal development so that they are even better prepared for life in modern Britain.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is James Lutton.

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

This inspection took place on 15 and 16 September 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with leaders, staff, governors and local authority representatives during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers and a wide range of pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The leadership of the school has changed since the last inspection. The headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Martin Bell

Lead inspector:

Claire Stewart, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Nicky Parkinson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

134

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: 268

School capacity

150

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)

1.49%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.75%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

2.24%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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)

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)	44%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38%	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	85%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	69%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	95%	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	58%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	48%	71%	Below

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	73%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	14%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
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	43%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
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	14%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
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	29%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
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	14%	68%	-53 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
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	43%	80%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
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	14%	78%	-63 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
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	29%	80%	-51 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	3.7%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.3%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.0%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.7%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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