Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School

Address: Devonshire Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 1DW

Unique reference number (URN): 119446

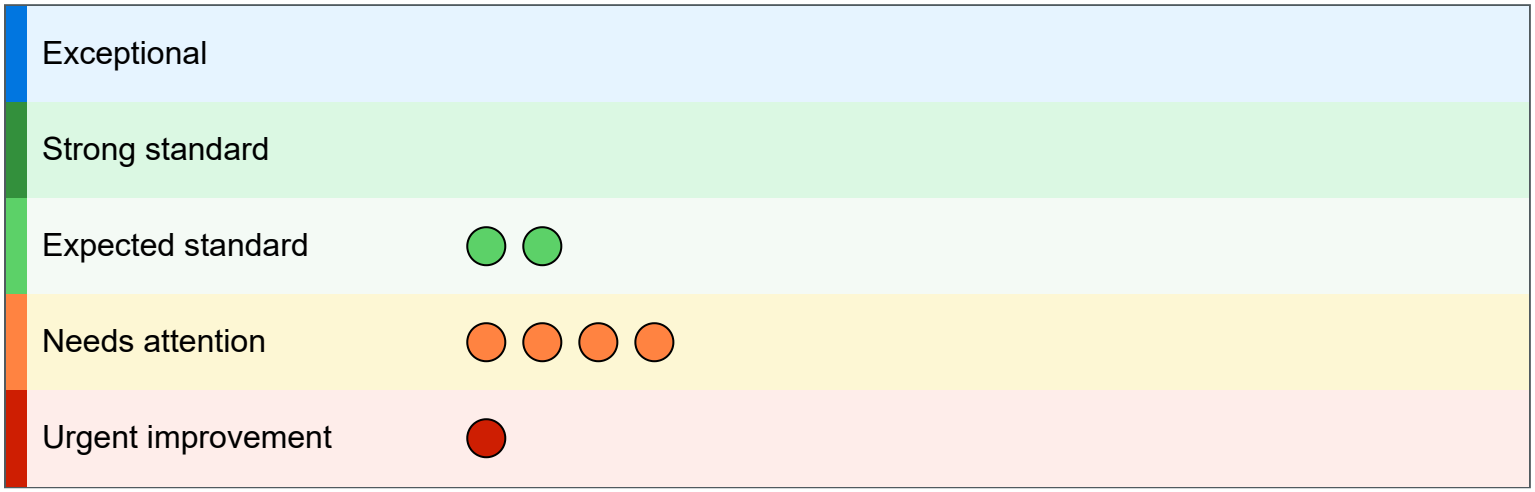
Monitoring inspection: 16 June 2026

This school had a full inspection on 20 January 2026. We graded some areas as 'urgent improvement' and 'needs attention' from the full inspection. We carried out a monitoring inspection on 16 June 2026.

Inspectors only considered the areas marked as updated.

Inspectors focused on the following areas: Early years.

To find out more read our monitoring inspection guidance.



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.

This school requires significant improvement

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **significant improvement** because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour **Expected standard**

Leaders take effective action to help pupils to attend well. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing quickly. Persistent absence is closer to national averages. A small number of pupils face unavoidable challenges that negatively impact on their attendance. Pupils that do not face these challenges attend as well as other pupils nationally. Where individual pupils struggle to attend, leaders are effective in helping to reduce the barriers that impact their attendance. As a result, most pupils who struggle to attend school improve their attendance over time.

From early years onwards, leaders have established clear routines for pupils. This helps most pupils to behave well. If pupils struggle to manage their behaviour, they receive kind and tailored support to help them to get back on track. This support is successful. Staff teach all pupils the skills that they need to behave well. Pupils increasingly use these skills to manage their own behaviour successfully. Across school, staff consistently apply the behaviour policy. Where necessary, they make well-considered adaptations to this policy to support individual pupils. These adjustments are effective. Bullying happens rarely, but when it does, leaders employ effective strategies to tackle it quickly. Leaders have established a culture in which pupils are known and well cared for.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have established a suitable personal, social, health and economic curriculum. Pupils know about keeping healthy through exercise and a balanced diet. They understand about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. These aspects prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Leaders make sure that pupils understand the importance of reflecting on their own ideas and beliefs. They engage thoughtfully with different issues. Pupils understand and celebrate people's differences. Pupils are able to discuss aspects of British values and what these mean to them. Leaders have established a culture in which pupils treat each other with kindness and respect.

Pupils benefit from a range of roles that help them to develop personally and socially. For example, some pupils contribute as members of the school council. Some work in the ‘reflection gang’ and support pupils if they are feeling upset or lonely. Other pupils contribute as the ‘mini-SLT’ and support staff to keep improving their school. These roles help pupils to develop their sense of citizenship. Pupils are proud of their contributions. Many are positive role models for younger pupils. Leaders make sure that everyone is included. Pupils who face disadvantage experience the same opportunities as their peers. The personal development programme supports them well.

Pupils are given a range of opportunities to take part in clubs and visits. Additionally, leaders provide opportunities for pupils to make a difference in their community. For example, pupils support the local food bank and sing for a local care home. These opportunities help pupils to contribute to their school and beyond.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Over time, too many pupils have not secured the important foundations in writing, reading and mathematics. Many pupils have gaps in their previous knowledge that persist. This limits their achievement. While leaders have recently improved the curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6, pupils' achievement across the curriculum is uneven.

Where leaders have prioritised their work, for example in reading and mathematics, pupils’ achievement is improving. This is reflected in national tests. Leaders have also improved the teaching of phonics and writing. However, in these areas, pupils' achievement in national tests lags behind the improvements made in school. Overall, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps in education as they need to be.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Over time, many pupils have not secured the important foundations in reading, writing and mathematics that they need. They have a number of gaps in their knowledge. While leaders

have improved the curriculum, gaps in pupils' learning persist. Leaders have put in place the plans to bring about necessary improvements to the curriculum that pupils study from Year 1 to Year 6. However, it is too early to see the impact of this on pupils' achievement.

Where leaders have placed their focus, for example on phonics and mathematics, pupils benefit from an improved curriculum. Leaders have only recently established the curriculum in most other subjects. The new curriculum is broad, but leaders have not clearly identified the important knowledge that pupils need to acquire. Leaders have not made sure that staff have the knowledge that they need to teach the curriculum consistently well. Staff sometimes provide tasks that do not help pupils to learn well enough. In handwriting, for example, pupils do not develop the skills that they need. Overall, pupils do not achieve well enough, particularly in reading and writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive support to help them to be ready for learning. However, pupils with SEND experience the same variation in the quality of the curriculum as other pupils. Learning is sometimes not adapted precisely enough to their needs. This limits these pupils' achievement.

Inclusion

Needs attention

Most disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND quickly and early. However, adaptions to teaching for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are not consistently effective. This means that these pupils do not get the sufficient support they need to secure basic skills and key knowledge across the curriculum. As a result, some pupils access learning well while others struggle with tasks that are not matched to their individual starting points or specific barriers. Leaders are addressing this, but it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Leaders check some aspects of provision for pupils with SEND, which includes making sure that staff use appropriate resources and equipment. However, leaders' checks do not inform them with sufficient clarity about where pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils cannot access the curriculum successfully, for example when extra support or interventions do not help pupils address gaps in their learning.

Staff are beginning to benefit from training designed to help them support pupils' wellbeing more effectively. Leaders work with other professionals to shape this support and continue to build positive relationships with parents. This often helps families access wider support when needed. Leaders draw on what they know about the school to shape a strategy for disadvantaged pupils. They know that there is more work to do to ensure that these pupils achieve highly across all subjects.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Those who are responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties. However, over time, they have not secured an accurate enough picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses or challenged leaders sufficiently well. Consequently, the pace of improvement is too slow. Pupils do not benefit from a curriculum or teaching that helps them to achieve as

well as they should. Children in early years do not secure the important skills or knowledge that they need.

Leaders accurately identify the most important aspects that need to be improved in school. Generally, they take the right actions to bring about these improvements. However, leaders' actions to improve the school are in the early stages of roll out.

Governors and leaders now ensure that the decisions that they make are in the best interests of pupils, especially pupils who are vulnerable or face disadvantage. Leaders make sure that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. This work is prioritised and successful. Leaders have also made sure that staff have access to suitable professional learning.

Urgent improvement

Early years Updated

Urgent improvement

Since the previous inspection, leaders have begun to redesign the early years curriculum so that it is more ambitious. There is now a clearer focus on the key knowledge that children need for the next steps in their learning. However, this work is not fully complete. The interactions between staff and children vary in quality. Although expectations for children's achievement are rising, the tasks that staff set for children do not consistently develop the depth of knowledge required for the Year 1 curriculum. This is especially true for children's understanding of number.

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

Monitoring inspection : 16 June 2026

In the early years, leaders are beginning to set higher expectations for children's achievement. Staff are increasingly focused on equipping children with the essential knowledge that they will need for Year 1. However, many of the curriculum improvements are still at an early stage of development.

Full inspection : 20 January 2026

Staff welcome pupils warmly at the start of each day. This helps pupils to settle quickly to routines. Pupils know what is expected of them, and they mostly meet these expectations. Leaders know pupils and their families very well. They use this knowledge to accurately identify barriers to learning that pupils might have. However, teaching is not adapted well enough to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils enjoy their learning. Adults show pupils how to have positive relationships. Pupils use these examples in their relationships with each other. Leaders have established a culture in which all pupils know that they belong.

In early years, leaders have not made sure that an ambitious curriculum is in place. Leaders do not provide children with learning that helps them to secure the important knowledge that they need for Year 1 and beyond.

Leaders' recent actions have brought some improvement to pupils' achievement, for example in phonics. However, overall, pupils are not achieving well enough. Leaders have recently established an ambitious curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6. This is not taught consistently well to pupils. When it is taught less well, this has a negative impact on pupils' achievement. Additionally, pupils have many gaps in their previous learning. These gaps are not addressed well enough.

Leaders encourage pupils to represent their peers through various leadership roles. Pupils become helpful role models for younger pupils. This supports pupils to behave well, in and out of their classrooms. Staff apply the school's expectations consistently and kindly. If pupils struggle to manage their feelings and behaviour, staff teach effective strategies to help them. Pupils get back on track quickly. Bullying is infrequent. If it happens, adults deal with it quickly and effectively. Overall, pupils attend well. Leaders' actions to improve attendance are bearing fruit.

Next steps Updated

- Leaders should continue to refine the early years curriculum so that staff consistently support children to develop the depth of knowledge needed for the Year 1 curriculum.
- Those responsible for governance should ensure that they have an accurate view of the standard of education in the school and challenge leaders more effectively in achieving their priorities.
- Leaders should make sure that the curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and that teachers develop the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum consistently so that pupils achieve well, particularly in handwriting across year groups.
- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is adapted sufficiently and that their knowledge about the effectiveness of strategies to reduce gaps in pupils' learning improves, so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils achieve well.

About this inspection

The inspector conducted this monitoring inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005. It was carried out to evaluate the progress leaders have made in improving the evaluation area graded as 'urgent improvement' at the previous full inspection.

This was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require significant improvement following the full inspection that took place in January 2026.

The purpose of this monitoring inspection was to identify and report on the school's progress in addressing the priorities for improvement set out in the report card from the full inspection. Inspectors may change a grade for one or more evaluation area determined at the full inspection based on evidence gathered during the monitoring inspection.

The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, governors, including the chair of governors, and children during the inspection.

The inspector confirmed the following information about the school:

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils in the school.

Headteacher: Helen Victoria Bird

Lead inspector:
Steve Bentham, His Majesty's 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

190
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

210
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)

46.84%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

2.63%
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

17.37%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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	48%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	58%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	61%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	73%	Below

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	60%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	58%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	63%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	43%	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	62%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	56%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	71%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	49%	68%	-19 pp
2024/25 (revised)	45%	69%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	67%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	43%	66%	-23 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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	73%	81%	-8 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	53%	78%	-25 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	56%	78%	-22 pp
2024/25 (revised)	45%	78%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	78%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	77%	-13 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	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	82%	81%	1 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	79%	-23 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	80%	79%	1 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.2%	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 (2 term)	20.8%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	20.0%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.9%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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