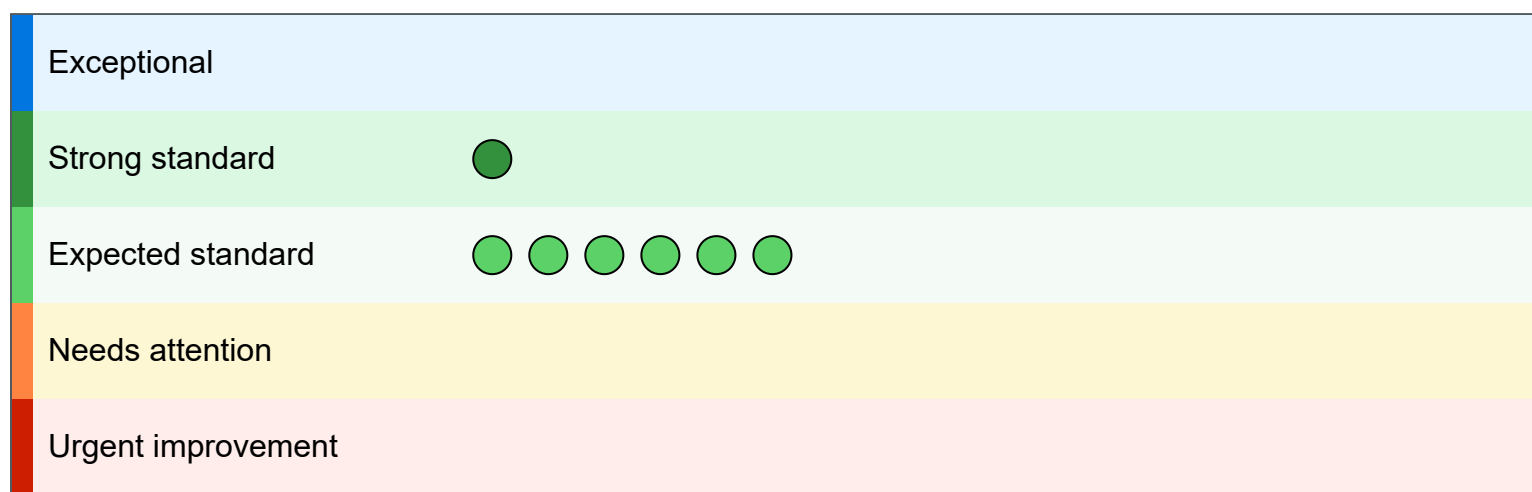


St Martin's Catholic Primary School and Preschool

Address: St Martin's Lane, Murdishaw, St Martin's Lane, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 6HZ

Unique reference number (URN): 111380

Inspection report: 21 April 2026



✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that inclusion runs through every part of school life. They review the curriculum and teaching regularly to make sure it meets the needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Staff know pupils really well and adapt teaching carefully to remove barriers to learning. This approach enables pupils to access the full curriculum and make secure progress.

Leaders identify pupils' needs early and put support in place quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. This includes pupils with an education, health and care plan. Staff provide consistent support and work closely with families and other professionals. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well, participate fully and feel part of the school community.

Leaders use additional funding very purposefully. Disadvantaged pupils receive help that strengthens their access to learning and wider opportunities. This includes targeted academic support and help to take part in clubs and visits. These actions help pupils develop confidence and engagement.

Leaders give careful attention to pupils facing barriers to wellbeing. Pupils who are known or previously known to social care receive timely and very effective pastoral support. Staff work closely with parents and carers and maintain strong links with other services. This highly effective work enables pupils to feel safe, supported and able to thrive.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Since the last inspection, leaders' focus on improving achievement has had a positive impact. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 secure the most important knowledge and skills that they need to help them to learn well. They learn the sounds and letters that they need to start to learn to read. Pupils write simple sentences using letters that they form accurately and with correct punctuation. As pupils move through school, they memorise times table facts so that they can apply these when solving problems.

Over the last 3 years, end of key stage 2 achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. Despite some pupils arriving and leaving the school during the school year and a high number of disadvantaged pupils, achievement is broadly in line with national averages. In other subjects, such as music in Year 3 and history in Year 6, pupils achieve similarly well. Pupils talk with confidence about what they have learned.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points and disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as similar pupils nationally. On the whole, pupils are ready for the next stage of their education, although higher attainers in

reading do not yet reach the highest standards and an attainment gap remains for disadvantaged pupils.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' focus on attendance has had a positive impact. Since the last inspection, attendance has improved, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders identify reasons for any absence and seek to remove these barriers so that pupils do not miss out on learning. This includes work with parents and carers to give the support needed so that pupils come to school each day. Leaders ensure that pupils catch up on missed learning wherever possible. However, there is more work to do to ensure that pupils attend in line with national averages, especially those with the lowest attendance.

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Leaders set high expectations which are consistently upheld by staff. Pupils know the school rules well and live up to them so that the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils are friendly and welcoming. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are highly respectful of staff. Pupils manage their emotions well. If pupils need extra help to do this, expert staff provide it quickly and carefully. This means that lessons are calm and pupils can continue to learn well.

Staff do not tolerate bullying or discrimination of any kind. Leaders ensure that any such incidents are dealt with swiftly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have effective oversight of the curriculum and teaching. Since the last inspection, subject curriculums have become well embedded. Leaders design each curriculum carefully so that staff know exactly what to teach and when. Leaders consider how pupils remember learning over time. Staff focus on key vocabulary and revisit important concepts regularly. This helps pupils to build and retain new knowledge. Leaders equip staff to teach effectively. Regular training helps staff develop secure subject knowledge and confidence in how to teach it. As a result, staff use a range of approaches to help pupils learn well.

Leaders place basic skills at the heart of the curriculum. Staff teach phonics from the Reception class so that pupils can begin to read and write. Older pupils practise times tables daily. These routines support pupils to develop confidence and fluency. Staff check pupils' learning regularly. They identify gaps quickly and intervene when needed. For example, staff monitor how well pupils hold pencils for writing and correct errors early. Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Staff adapt learning well for pupils with additional needs, including those with an education, health and care plan.

Early years

Expected standard 

Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on the development of the provision for early years. This includes the new governor-led preschool. Leaders have designed a clear curriculum that helps children build learning through play over time. As a result, children make a secure start.

Two-year-olds feel safe and well cared for. Staff support them closely as they settle and explore. Children aged 3 and 4 in the Nursery learn positive routines. They learn about healthy habits and hygiene. For example, they wash their hands before snack and brush their teeth together afterwards.

Across the early years, children enjoy learning. They paint, build and explore with confidence. In the Reception class, staff place a clear focus on reading, letter formation and counting. Well-trained staff understand children's needs and adapt activities to support them. Staff encourage children to develop confidence and independence.

Children feel happy and secure. They build effective relationships with the adults who care for them. When children explore the provision, staff support them well. They model key words and encourage children to develop their language skills.

This prepares children well for Year 1. The next step is to deepen learning across all areas of the curriculum, including through further development of the outdoor provision.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious and strive to give each pupil at St Martin's, 'the life chances that they deserve regardless of their starting point and where they come from'. To do this, they provide effective leadership. Leaders and governors understand the school's strengths. They identify areas that need improvement and set clear priorities. Leaders use information and data to guide decisions and review progress regularly. This ensures that improvement work remains focused on pupils' best interests.

Leaders and governors consider staff wellbeing and workload. They recognise the pressures that staff face and take steps to manage demands carefully. Leaders plan changes in a sensible way and listen to staff views. This helps staff feel valued and supported. As a result, staff remain committed and motivated.

Leaders support staff to develop their skills and knowledge. They provide regular training that reflects school priorities. Staff value this support and apply what they learn in their work. Leaders also make sure that staff can draw on appropriate expertise when they need it. This helps staff to feel confident in their roles.

Parents and carers speak positively about the school. Leaders engage with parents well and communicate clearly with them. Leaders believe that when families are safe and well, children can flourish. The school supports parents through advice, guidance and work with other professionals when needed. This also extends to the wider community. Leaders host a food bank and holiday provision. They work closely with the local church, health centre and community café. St Martin's takes pride in being at the heart of its local community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders make sure that pupils at St Martin's take part in a wide range of opportunities that support their personal development. This starts with a well-planned curriculum. Pupils learn about important topics such as healthy eating, friendships and different types of families. All pupils benefit from this, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils understand how to cross the road and how stay safe online. Pupils learn about British values as well as different faiths and cultures. They are building their understanding of these important aspects of the curriculum to ensure they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and wellbeing. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. 'Mindful Monday' gives pupils a calm and positive start to the week so that they are ready to learn. Staff know pupils well and provide caring pastoral support. Pupils trust adults to help them when needed. They also know that trained staff are available to support them with their emotions. The school dog, Charlie, plays a valued role in this work. Pupils enjoy reading to him and taking part in activities with him. This helps them to feel calm, relaxed and more confident.

Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their residential visits in Years 3, 4 and 6. They enjoy spending time with their friends and trying new activities. These experiences help them to build confidence and resilience. Pupils also take part in a range of clubs. There are opportunities for pupils of all ages including in dance, netball, chess, and cartoon and colouring. Subject curriculums are enhanced through a variety of trips and visiting speakers to school. Leaders check which opportunities pupils take part in and use this information to improve the offer where needed.

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

Pupils feel proud to belong to St Martin's Catholic Primary School and Pre-School. Pupils arrive each morning happy and ready to learn. They enjoy seeing their friends and are greeted with a smile by staff who know them well. Staff care for every pupil and make sure that pupils feel safe. Staff give extra support to those pupils who need it most and link effectively with parents and carers. As a result, children settle well and thrive. Everyone feels welcome and valued, including those pupils who arrive during the school year.

Staff help pupils to become lifelong learners with aspirations for the future. In lessons, pupils grow in curiosity and learn to work independently. They understand that effort leads to success. Pupils achieve well from their starting points. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively so they can learn alongside their peers. By the end of Reception and Year 6, most pupils are ready for the next stage of their education. They secure important skills in reading, writing and mathematics. These skills help them to succeed in other subjects such as science, French and history.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences such as performing in a Shakespeare play, learning to play a brass instrument or competing in sports' competitions. Many pupils take on leadership roles such as 'eco hero', junior safety officer and school council member. Pupils wear their special badges with pride. These opportunities help pupils to grow in confidence and understand responsibility.

Pupils behave very well. They show respect and good manners. In lessons, they listen carefully and focus on their work. Bullying is not accepted. Pupils trust staff to deal with any

concerns quickly and fairly. Most pupils attend well and those that do not attend often enough are supported by leaders to improve.

Next steps

- Leaders should maintain their focus on improving attendance so that it is at least in line with national averages, particularly for pupils with the lowest attendance, so that these pupils do not miss out on essential learning.
 - Leaders should further embed the curriculum through effective systems for teaching, assessment, intervention and monitoring so that all pupils achieve consistently well. This includes increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standard in reading and ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
 - Leaders should develop the continuous provision in the pre-school and the Reception class so that it consistently enables children to develop a deep understanding across all seven areas of learning, including through purposeful use of the outdoor environment.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sandra Cassidy.

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 HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and early years lead. They spoke to governors, including the chair, and a representative of the diocese and local authority.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The last section 48 inspection was held in February 2026.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a governor-led pre-school. This includes provision for 2-year-old children and a Nursery for 36 children.

Catherine Ming: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector


Team inspectors:

Suzanne Blay, Ofsted Inspector

Christopher McDonald, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

182

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)

42.31%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

3.85%

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

21.98%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	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	66%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	70%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	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	75%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	74%	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	69%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	65%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	73%	Below

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%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	47%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	43%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	47%	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	57%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	59%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	47%	60%	Below

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	65%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	59%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	58%	Above

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	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	59%	Close to average

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	46%	68%	-22 pp
2024/25 (revised)	47%	69%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	43%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	47%	66%	-20 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	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25 (revised)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	64%	80%	-15 pp
2022/23 (final)	47%	78%	-32 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	65%	78%	-13 pp
2024/25 (revised)	59%	78%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	64%	78%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	73%	77%	-4 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	63%	80%	-17 pp
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	79%	-22 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	60%	79%	-19 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)	8.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.9%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.3%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	25.0%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	32.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	33.7%	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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