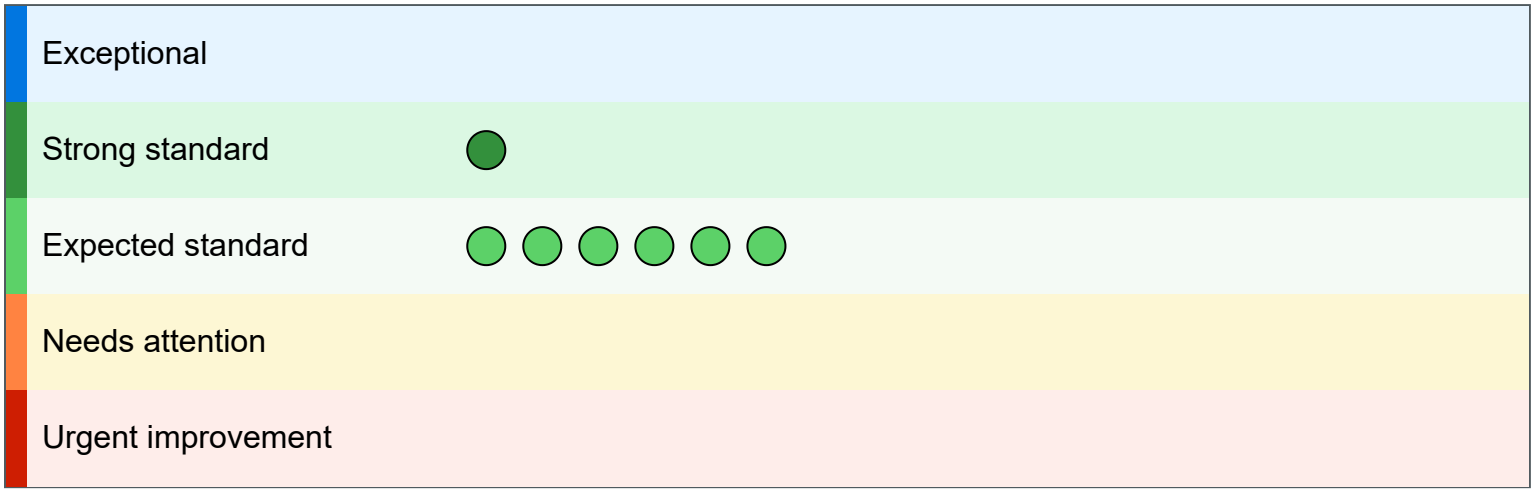
St James' Church of England Primary School Blackburn

Address: Earl Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 8EG

Unique reference number (URN): 119502

Inspection report: 20 October 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

Achievement

Strong standard

Pupils develop secure knowledge across the curriculum and recall previous learning with confidence. They apply what they have learned across different subjects. Older pupils speak thoughtfully about their work. For example, they explain the experiences of soldiers in the First World War.

Pupils produce work that is accurate and well presented. It reflects the knowledge and skills they have learned over time. They take pride in their work and approach learning positively.

Published outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are above national averages. This includes pupils who face disadvantage. Pupils also attain well in the phonics and multiplication tables checks.

Pupils build secure foundations in English and mathematics from an early age. They use these skills to solve problems, reason confidently and deepen their understanding across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress from their starting points. Pupils are typically well prepared for the next stage of education.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders promote the importance of regular attendance. They monitor attendance closely. Leaders use this information to identify pupils who need additional support. Leaders work with parents and carers to address barriers to attendance and, when necessary, seek support from the local authority and other agencies. These actions have improved attendance and reduced persistent absence for many pupils. This includes pupils who face disadvantage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Despite this work, some pupils continue to miss school too often.

Pupils engage positively in school life and approach their learning with interest. They understand the school's expectations and meet them consistently. Classrooms are calm and pupils engage positively with tasks set. Pupils treat others with kindness and respect. They are polite and considerate towards staff, visitors and their peers. Older pupils take pride in carrying out responsibilities that contribute to school life. Positive relationships are evident throughout the school, including during social times. Pupils include others in games and activities and ensure that everyone can participate. This includes pupils with SEND. When disagreements occur, pupils often resolve them sensibly. They trust staff to help when needed. Staff deal with incidents of conflict and bullying effectively, helping pupils to feel safe and supported.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. It reflects the context of the school and the needs of its pupils. They have identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn in each subject. Lessons are sequenced carefully so that pupils build on prior learning and deepen their understanding over time.

On the whole, lessons are well taught. However, in a small number of lessons, activities do not build sufficiently on what pupils already know. This limits how well some pupils deepen their understanding. Teachers use their subject knowledge to present new learning clearly. They use assessment information to address misconceptions and identify next steps in learning. Through effective questioning, teachers encourage pupils to explain their thinking and deepen their understanding.

Staff adapt learning appropriately so that all pupils can access the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. When needed, staff provide additional support to help pupils secure key knowledge and skills.

Leaders prioritise oracy. They provide pupils with frequent opportunities to develop their vocabulary and confidence in speaking. This supports pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Leaders also prioritise reading, writing and mathematics. Phonics is taught consistently well. It supports reading fluency and spelling acquisition. Staff teach handwriting effectively. Pupils quickly develop a legible written style.

Early years

Expected standard

Children settle quickly into the routines of the early years. Warm relationships with staff help them feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Staff know children well. They work closely with parents and carers to understand each child's needs, interests and starting points. Staff support children to develop independence in daily routines and self-care. Leaders ensure that statutory requirements are met and that staff follow agreed policies and procedures.

Children in the Nursery class explore a range of activities that promote curiosity and learning. They play cooperatively and interact positively with one another, including children who are at the early stages of learning English. Staff use conversations, stories, songs and rhymes to develop children's language and communication skills.

In Reception, children build on these foundations across all areas of learning. Leaders prioritise the development of early reading, writing and mathematics. Staff teach phonics consistently well and provide regular opportunities for children to apply their knowledge when reading and writing. Children use number knowledge confidently during play and staff-led activities.

Staff identify the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities promptly. They adapt learning and provide appropriate support so that children can participate fully in the curriculum. Children develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for learning in Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established an inclusive culture where pupils are known well and valued as individuals. Staff identify pupils' social, emotional and academic needs promptly. Leaders use this information to remove barriers to learning and participation. They review support regularly and make changes when necessary.

Pupils' wellbeing is a priority. Staff help pupils understand how to maintain positive mental health and manage everyday challenges. When pupils need additional support, trained staff provide help to meet their individual needs.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Staff adapt learning and provide appropriate resources so that pupils can participate fully in lessons and school life. Leaders work closely with external professionals, including speech and language therapists, when specialist advice is needed. This helps staff meet pupils' needs effectively.

Leaders use additional funding thoughtfully for pupils who face disadvantage. They focus on improving attendance, supporting pupils' learning and ensuring that pupils can take part in the opportunities that the school provides.

Leaders work closely with professionals and agencies to support pupils known to social care, including those looked after by the local authority. These partnerships help ensure that pupils receive the support they need at the right time. As a result, pupils feel included, cared for and ready to learn.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders understand the context of the school and use this knowledge to identify priorities for improvement. They have focused on strengthening pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders continue to prioritise attendance and inclusion so that all pupils can participate fully in school life and learning.

Governors understand the school's priorities and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They keep informed through training, meetings and visits to the school. This helps them to ask appropriate questions about the school's work and monitor progress towards agreed priorities. Governors support leaders while maintaining oversight of the impact of their work.

Leaders invest in staff development. Staff access professional learning opportunities that help them strengthen their subject knowledge and classroom practice. Training supports staff to adapt learning appropriately and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff at different stages of their careers receive guidance and support to develop their confidence and expertise. Leaders consider staff wellbeing when making decisions. Staff value the support they receive and work collaboratively to meet the needs of pupils.

Staff work closely with parents and carers. Regular communication helps families understand their children's learning and development. Parents appreciate the school's caring approach and the support provided for their children.

Leaders work with a range of external partners, including local schools and professional services. These partnerships provide additional opportunities for pupils and support school improvement priorities. As a result, leaders draw on wider expertise to enhance pupils' experiences and support ongoing development across the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. This supports their safety, wellbeing and preparation for life beyond school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They understand risks associated with road safety, travelling in vehicles and using technology. Pupils learn how to stay safe online. This includes learning how to stay safe when using emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence. They also learn about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, physical activity, relationships and emotional wellbeing. Staff adapt this learning appropriately for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide additional support when required.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand the importance of treating others with respect. Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They learn about equality, fairness and the responsibilities of living in a diverse society. Pupils discuss different faiths, cultures and backgrounds with confidence and curiosity. They value the views and experiences of others and understand that people may hold different beliefs from their own.

Pupils take an active role in school life. They contribute through leadership responsibilities and opportunities to support the wider community. Pupils represent the school at sporting events and work alongside local organisations and local schools. However, opportunities for pupils to consider future career paths are limited.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities that broaden pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. Educational visits, including trips to places such as the local cathedral and zoo, help pupils build on their learning and develop their understanding of the wider world. Leaders ensure that pupils who face disadvantage can participate in these opportunities.

Pupils also benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Clubs, including sport, music, crafts and other interests, enable pupils to develop new skills, pursue personal interests and spend time with their peers. These experiences contribute positively to pupils' confidence, character and wider development.

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

Pupils are proud to attend this Church of England primary school. They arrive each morning ready to learn and settle quickly into established routines. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils build positive relationships with staff. Pupils trust staff to help with any worries or concerns. They feel safe in school. If bullying or friendship difficulties occur, staff deal with them promptly and effectively. Many pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They treat each other with kindness and respect. Pupils are polite, considerate and welcoming to others. They understand the school's expectations and make sensible choices.

Pupils are eager to learn and take pride in their work. They listen carefully, participate actively in lessons and persevere when learning is challenging. Across the curriculum, pupils develop secure knowledge and skills. This is true of pupils who face disadvantage and those at the early stages of learning English. These pupils receive effective support. This helps them to communicate confidently and access learning successfully. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff adapt learning carefully to help these pupils build knowledge, develop key skills and achieve success.

Pupils value the opportunities available beyond the classroom. Residential visits help them develop independence and confidence. Visits to local libraries, museums and places of interest broaden their experiences. Pupils enjoy taking part in clubs and activities, such as African drumming, cricket and crocheting. They enjoy developing new interests and talents.

Pupils contribute positively to school life through leadership responsibilities such as carbon neutral champions, online safety ambassadors and worship leaders. They also support the wider community through charitable fundraising and projects such as maintaining the church garden.

Next steps

- Leaders should further strengthen their work to reduce persistent absence so that more pupils attend school regularly.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently provide learning activities that extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding across the curriculum.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Erika Holmes.

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

This inspection took place on 20 and 21 October 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 the headteacher, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the governing board, including the chair of governors. They also

spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Blackburn. Its last section 48 inspection was September 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Doug Stitcher

Lead inspector:
Kathryn Pym, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Sarah Midgley, Ofsted Inspector
Jonathon Hobday, 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 20 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

395
Above 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

480

Well above 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)

25.36%
Close to 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

2.03%
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

21.27%
Above 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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	61%	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	R	R	R

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	83%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	74%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	90%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	56%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42%	46%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	81%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	47%	62%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	79%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	81%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	59%	Above

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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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	56%	69%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	42%	67%	-25 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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	81%	81%	0 pp
2023/24 (final)	47%	80%	-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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	56%	78%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	79%	78%	1 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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	81%	81%	1 pp
2023/24 (final)	74%	79%	-6 pp

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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
2025/26 (1 term)	6.1%	5.1%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	6.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.8%	5.5%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	19.0%	14.4%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	20.2%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	22.5%	14.6%	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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