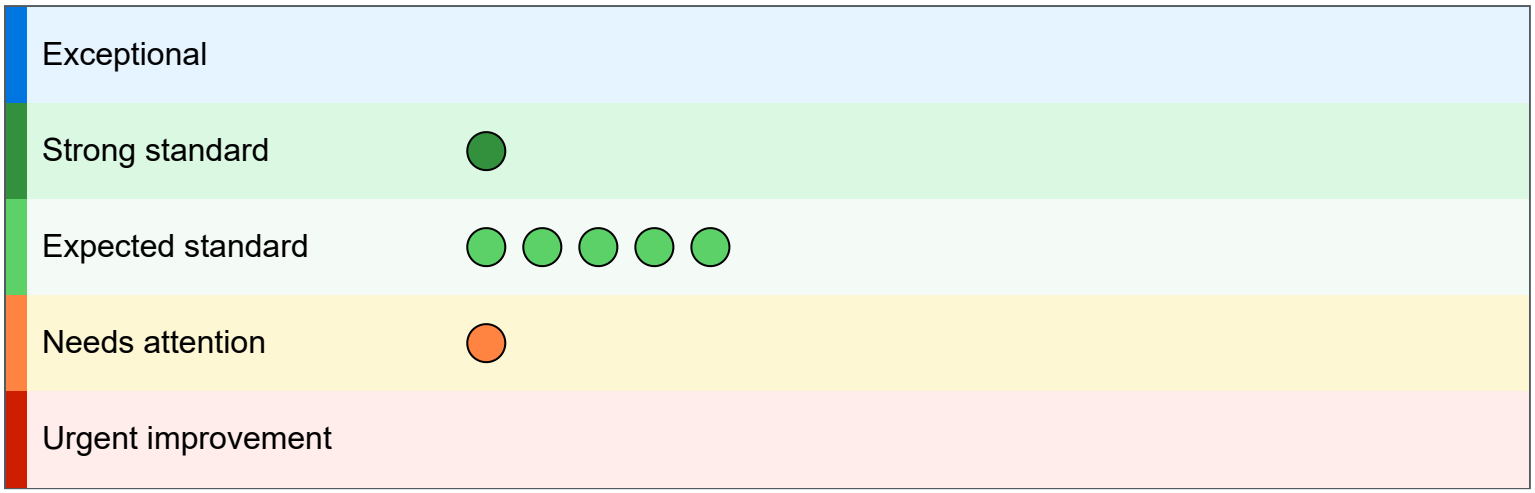
Rock Ferry Primary School

Address: Ionic Street, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Merseyside, CH42 2BL

Unique reference number (URN): 150115

Inspection report: 6 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

Early years

Strong standard

The early years provision is a strength of the school. From the moment children start in the Nursery Year, they benefit from an expertly crafted curriculum. Staff understand and nurture them. Children quickly settle into school routines. Classrooms are bursting with questions and curiosity. Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have rich opportunities to develop in all areas of learning. Staff ensure that activities develop key skills, alongside growing a love of learning.

Children's language and understanding develop through their high-quality interactions with staff. They engage confidently in purposeful learning. They concentrate for increasing periods of time and cooperate well. Activities such as making dough before shaping, rolling and snipping help children to develop fine motor control in meaningful contexts. They quickly develop their independence and self-care skills. Children care about resources and understand that tidy-up time is everyone's responsibility.

Staff form highly effective relationships with children and their families from the start. This helps them to understand children's individual needs so they can adapt provision precisely and thoughtfully. When needed, they engage with other professionals to support children to develop as well as they can. Children, including those with SEND, progress rapidly from their low starting points. Leaders ensure that children are ready to fly in Year 1.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Overall attendance rates are below national averages. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, there is a small proportion of pupils who are frequently absent from school. Often, the reasons for their non-attendance are beyond the school's control. This has a disproportionate impact on the overall absence rates. Even so, leaders take suitable action to try and reduce the barriers that cause some of these pupils to miss school. This is having some success for individual pupils. As a result, they benefit academically and socially because they are in school more often.

Leaders and staff have created a calm and respectful environment in which pupils feel safe, supported and ready to learn. Pupils behave well and work hard in lessons. Rock Ferry routines are well established. Pupils understand what is expected of them throughout the school day. Leaders provide effective support to any pupils who need help to manage their emotions. This helps pupils to make positive behaviour choices. As a result, suspensions have reduced over time. Pupils know that bullying and discriminatory language are unacceptable. They are proactive 'upstanders' who know how to report what they see and hear. Staff deal with issues quickly and decisively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Since joining the trust, leaders have made well-considered decisions to strengthen the curriculum. The refreshed curriculum is broad, ambitious and relevant. The changes focus on teaching the essential knowledge and skills that current pupils need to successfully access learning and be ready for the next steps in their education. Staff access the precise training and support that they need to deliver new learning effectively.

Leaders know what is working well in the delivery of the curriculum and which areas require further development. Phonics lessons are delivered effectively. When pupils struggle to keep up with the pace of the programme, staff step in quickly with the right support. This means that most pupils move into key stage 2 with the phonics knowledge they need. Staff have not swiftly addressed gaps in older pupils' essential knowledge and skills. This is particularly the case for those pupils who did not benefit from the school's renewed curriculum earlier in their primary school journey.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. They explain new learning clearly, building on what pupils already know. Staff understand pupils' individual needs. They make appropriate adaptations and adjustments to tasks, explanations or resources. Consequently, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn alongside their peers and succeed.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly. They ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged benefit from suitable adaptations to support their learning. Staff training has improved confidence and expertise in providing the right support, in the right way. This generally helps pupils to overcome barriers to learning. Positive relationships between staff and pupils further strengthen the support provided. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully and regularly review the impact of support. They use this information to further adapt provision where necessary. Pupils typically make progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders and staff understand the impact of disadvantage and SEND on the lives of pupils and their families. Pastoral support is responsive and highly effective. Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used appropriately to enrich disadvantaged pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils who are known, or previously known, to social care receive timely, sensitive support. As a result, barriers reduce and pupils feel included, supported and valued members of the school community.

When needed, leaders commission alternative provision to ensure that pupils' needs are met. While attending provision, leaders maintain effective oversight of pupils' wellbeing and their academic progress.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

School and trust leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They are united in their ambition to move the school forward and

secure much-needed improved outcomes for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. While the school has made some positive progress in this area, it rightly remains a key focus.

Trustees and those responsible for governance know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties diligently. They ensure that resources are managed wisely and used to improve provision for all groups of pupils. They provide challenge and targeted support based on a strengthened understanding of the school's context. They use visits, reports and discussions to hold leaders to account effectively. This work gives those responsible for governance and trustees the knowledge they need to check that the improvements are having the right impact on pupils.

Leaders and staff benefit from the wider trust offer of training and working alongside other schools within the trust to develop their skills. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about leaders' commitment to considering their workload and prioritising wellbeing. They feel valued and listened to. They are proud to be part of the school team.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. They value the warm, positive relationships that staff build with children and the care that they provide. All parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey would recommend the school to others.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an effective, well-sequenced personal development curriculum. It brings together personal, social and emotional development, wellbeing and relationships education. In doing so, leaders have carefully considered the local context and prioritised pupils' safety. Leaders also draw on external visitors, including the police, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. This helps to bring learning to life and teach pupils about risks relevant to their community.

Pupils learn how to use the internet safely. They know what steps to follow if they encounter something online that makes them feel uncomfortable, for example blocking people, reporting concerns or telling a trusted adult. Leaders support parents and carers by helping them to apply safety settings and parental controls to devices.

Pupils learn the importance of healthy eating, exercise and good mental health. They have access to 'calm corners' and 'safe spaces' if they feel anxious or overwhelmed. In addition, pupils have access to on-site mental health support and a dedicated post box where they can discreetly request help from staff. Leaders have developed 'sensory snack cards' to support readiness for learning. They feature short activities, such as press-ups or movement breaks. These strategies benefit both individual pupils and entire classes in feeling settled and calm.

Through the curriculum and the school's assembly programme, pupils experience different faiths, cultures and perspectives. Pupils learn how to express opinions respectfully and understand that others may hold different views. They develop tolerance and respect for those who are different from them. Pupils understand fundamental British values and why they are important. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils engage in leadership opportunities. They take on roles and responsibilities such as monitors, school council members, eco representatives and sports day helpers. This gives them confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Pupils enjoy the clubs, trips and experiences that encourage them to develop their talents and interests. Pupils benefit from residentials and trips to places like museums and nature reserves, which support curriculum learning. Leaders carefully track participation in enrichment activities. They ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, have equal access to opportunities which promote their emotional wellbeing, self-awareness and resilience.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Over time, many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have not attained well in the Year 6 national tests. This means that they have not been ready for the next steps in their education. Recent improvements to the curriculum and the way it is taught are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. This is enabling pupils, especially younger pupils, to build their knowledge more effectively. However, it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' outcomes in national tests. Some pupils, particularly those in Year 5 and Year 6, have gaps in the most important knowledge that they need in reading, writing and mathematics. At times, this makes it difficult for them to achieve all that they should.

Current pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well through the school's curriculum from their starting points. Children in the Reception Year and pupils in key stage 1 learn the essentials of reading, writing and mathematics securely. As a result, they are well prepared for the challenges of the key stage 2 curriculum.

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

Pupils start each day with a warm, personal welcome from caring staff. An early morning breakfast is available to all. Pupils are provided with toast, drinks and the opportunity to check in with staff should they need to. Pupils value this wholesome start to their school day. It helps them feel a sense of belonging.

Pupils enjoy attending school. They understand the importance of being in on time each day and attend school regularly. Children get off to an extremely positive start in the early years. Like their older peers, they are proud to be a part of the Rock Ferry Primary School 'crew'. Across the school, pupils learn how to stay safe and most importantly they feel safe. They are kind to each other, hardworking and resilient. Leaders' high expectations provide a clear framework for daily life. This helps pupils feel valued and understood. Pupils know that staff are there for them every step of the way.

Classrooms are a hive of purposeful activity. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the support that they need to learn alongside their classmates. Pupils behave well, work hard and aim high. Despite this, some pupils, especially older pupils and those who are disadvantaged, are not ready for the next steps in their education. This is because they have not benefited from leaders' recent changes to the curriculum. Too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This holds them back from achieving as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy letting off steam at social times. They make the most of opportunities to play games or to catch up with friends. They know that the school's rules are there to keep them safe. Pupils know how to report any concerns. They trust staff to listen to them and help them to work through any issues. Staff handle any instances of unkind words or bullying promptly.

Outside of the classroom, pupils have access to a variety of clubs and enrichment activities. This includes sports, music and martial arts. These opportunities enable pupils to pursue interests, develop talents and build their confidence as part of the school community.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that recent improvements to the curriculum and teaching lead to all pupils attaining well over time.
- Leaders should focus on ensuring that any gaps in pupils' English and mathematics knowledge are swiftly addressed so that pupils are supported to achieve all that they can and are ready for their next stage of learning
- Leaders should continue to implement their strategy to reduce any ongoing barriers to pupils' attendance so that the number of pupils who attend school regularly continues to increase.

About this inspection

This school is part of Cheshire Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Steven Ellis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Emlyn Wright.

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

This inspection took place on 6 and 7 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 and other senior leaders during the inspection. They also met with trustees, the chief executive officer, trust leaders, members of the multi-

academy trust's interim development board, as well as a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, parents and carers. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of two unregistered and one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Sara Radley

Lead inspector:
Nichola Tomkow, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Mark Ward, Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Burnside, 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 6 October 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

301
Close to 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

345
Close to 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)

68.75%
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: 26.5%

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

2.99%
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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

34.55%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	28%	62%	Below
2023/24		61%	

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
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	40%	75%	Below
2023/24		74%	

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)	49%	72%	Below
2023/24		72%	

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)	42%	74%	Below
2023/24		73%	

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)	21%	47%	Below
2023/24		46%	

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)	30%	63%	Below
2023/24		62%	

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)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24		58%	

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)	36%	61%	Below
2023/24		59%	

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 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)	21%	69%	-48 pp
2023/24		67%	

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)	30%	81%	-51 pp
2023/24		80%	

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)	36%	78%	-42 pp
2023/24		78%	

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)	36%	81%	-44 pp
2023/24		79%	

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.

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)	7.9%	5.1%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	7.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.2%	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)	20.5%	14.4%	Above
2024/25 (3 term)	20.0%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	31.5%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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