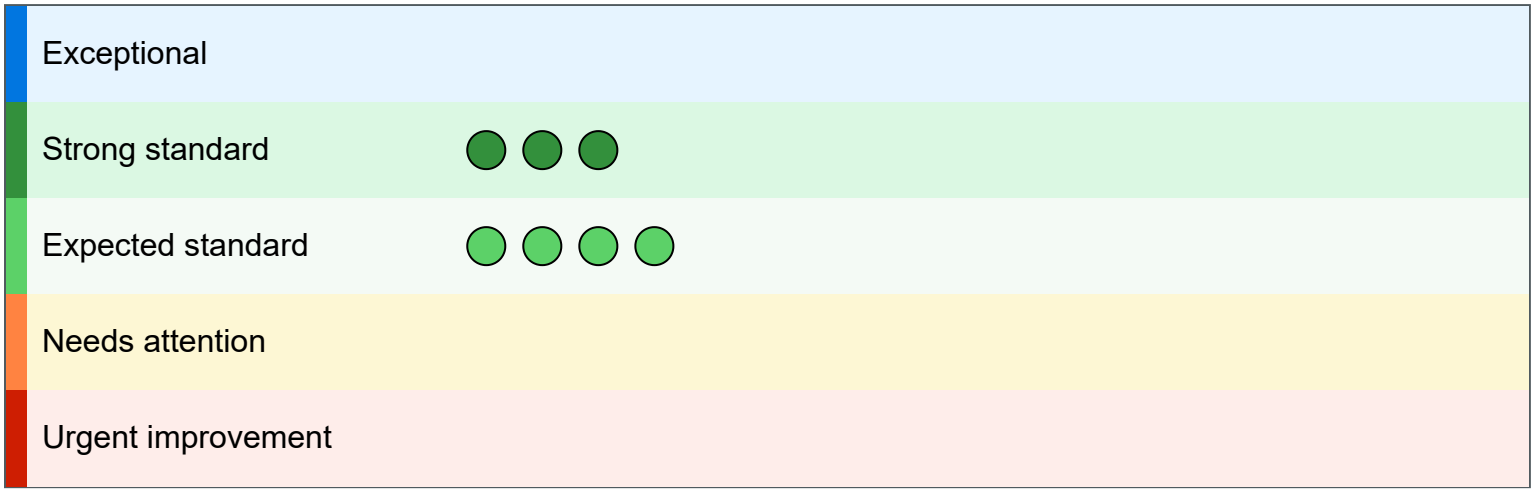
Benhall St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Address: School Lane, Benhall, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 1HE

Unique reference number (URN): 149991

Inspection report: 15 September 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

Pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing receive high-quality support. Leaders have put in place precise ways to identify specifically what these barriers are. This includes the potential barriers that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) face. There has been a notable increase in the percentage of pupils who attend the school with SEND. Leaders have ensured staff quickly get up to speed with what their specific needs are. This enables staff to put in place the right support, at the right time. For example, staff across the school use effective strategies to support pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. This helps the pupils to feel settled, belong and ready to learn. This helps pupils with SEND to achieve very well from their starting points.

The school has above average proportions of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are skilled in how to use additional funding to help the pupils to thrive. Staff understand the best ways to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, staff teach pupils subject specific language. This helps them to develop a broad vocabulary. Leaders also use additional funding to provide a range of enrichment opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. This helps to ignite talents and aspirations pupils did not know existed.

Leaders work very well with other professionals. They proactively engage with the support of other agencies. Leaders act on the advice they are given. This helps them to ensure pupils who need specific help get the support they need.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders have carefully managed a significant period of change. Leaders have had to prioritise specific areas of the school to improve. They have done this very well. Leaders rightly started by establishing clear systems for identifying pupils' specific barriers related to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have had significant success in setting clear expectations for behaviour. They have also successfully put in place a clear curriculum with well-considered enrichment opportunities. This has brought about the rapid improvement that was needed. Pupils benefit from a school that is better preparing them for their future.

Leaders have successfully worked with staff and parents and carers during this time of significant change. Staff are highly positive of the way leaders support them to develop professionally. They value the way leaders across the school and trust support them to manage their workload and wellbeing. Staff are incredibly proud of the journey the school has been on and are excited about the improvements they want to continue to make. Parents are equally positive of the way the school has transformed. They appreciate leaders making decisions in the best interests of their child.

Trustees provide scrutiny and effective support where needed. They work very well with the local governing board to check on the work of the school. Trust leaders provide a further level of support. This helps leaders at all levels to understand where to target future school improvement priorities.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have embedded a high-quality personal development offer. Pupils benefit from an enrichment offer that is carefully tailored to their needs, wants and aspirations. Pupils delight in the sporting opportunities they have. Competing for the school in local tag rugby competitions is a particular highlight. Pupils are also excited about the well-planned opportunities to learn to play brass instruments. Whether playing the trumpet, baritone or cornet, these ignite talents and passions pupils did not realise they had.

Leaders have a clear vision to enable pupils to see themselves as part of their community. Leaders have taken care to ensure pupils benefit from the chance to learn in the local and wider community. These opportunities have been carefully sequenced, so they build over time. Younger children love to learn in Benhall. As pupils move through the school, they delight in their visits to local sailing clubs or on the train to The Royal Opera House in London.

Leaders have a deep understanding of the pastoral needs of pupils. High-quality pastoral support is a thread that runs through all that happens. Leaders ensure they identify, with precision, when a pupil may need something different to support with their wellbeing. Well-trained staff provide the support these pupils need. Leaders ensure they keep a close eye on the impact of the support on offer. This helps them to adjust and adapt their approaches when needed.

Pupils secure important knowledge across the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. They have a thorough understanding of the changes they experience as they mature. They know how to manage the way these changes make them feel. The PSHE curriculum works effectively alongside the rest of the curriculum. Pupils secure a detailed knowledge of the differences in the world around them. This instils in pupils a strong sense of respect for those who maybe different to them.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Overall pupils achieve well. This is shown by the increasing number of pupils who reach the expected standards in the national tests. This includes the number of pupils who secure their phonics knowledge in Year 1 and Year 2. This improving achievement is reflected in pupils' knowledge across subjects. Pupils secure their understanding of subject-specific language, for example. They use this confidently and accurately when exploring networks during computing or making circuits in science lessons. While pupils achieve well overall, leaders understand the need to embed some of their newer approaches to helping pupils continue to improve their reading and writing. More work is needed to ensure teaching consistently provides pupils with opportunities to deepen their understanding of important knowledge across subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve particularly well. Well matched support enables the pupils to make impressive progress from their various starting

points and achieve targets as set out in their education, health and care plans.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise high attendance. Often pupils arrive at different points of the academic year. Sometimes, pupils have specific barriers towards attending school every day. Staff work effectively with parents and carers to identify how to remove these barriers. They have success with much of this work. Many pupils improve their attendance during their time here. Overall, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils who are absent and persistently absent. While this is the case, leaders know more work is needed. They understand the importance of ensuring that their approaches towards attendance result in both absence and persistent absence continuing to reduce.

Leaders have improved pupils' behaviour. Lessons are typically calm and free from disruption. Leaders have provided effective training to staff in how to help pupils to improve their behaviour should they need to. This work has been very successful. Staff are consistent in the support they provide. As a result, behavioural incidents have decreased markedly. Consequently, the school is a calm and warm place for pupils to learn. Pupils look after each other. They show kindness when they include each other in their games at lunchtime, for example. Bullying is rare. Should it happen, staff deal with it promptly and fairly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have worked to produce a clear, sequenced curriculum that identifies what pupils will learn across the different subjects. Leaders have trained staff in how to teach the curriculum. Consequently, it is being taught well. Leaders have rightly focused on ensuring the curriculum helps pupils to secure the building blocks of knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff provide effective support to help pupils become confident and fluent readers. They also ensure pupils have appropriate opportunities to become fluent in number. Leaders are working to refine the way staff help pupils to continue to improve their reading and writing once they are confident. They understand there is work needed to embed these approaches across the school.

Staff use assessment appropriately to identify how well pupils are faring. Of note is the way staff adapt their teaching to help pupils who face barriers to learning that help to close any gaps in knowledge. Leaders understand more work is needed to ensure staff consistently use their checks on learning to identify when pupils are ready to move on to more complex work. Sometimes, staff do not consistently support pupils to deepen their knowledge as well as they might.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise children getting off to a good start in the Reception Year. They have worked at pace to design a new curriculum. This identifies what children will learn across all areas of learning. Staff work effectively with parents and carers from the moment children join. This helps the school to quickly identify where a child may face barriers to learning. Staff work with leaders to ensure they put in place effective support so children quickly feel

settled and ready to learn. Children enjoy being together to sing nursery rhymes. They quickly build positive relationships with each other and with the staff.

Staff understand how to help children to develop their language and communication. Staff carefully narrate children's learning as they play. This helps children to become more confident speakers. It also helps children to develop their speech and vocabulary. Staff teach children the building blocks of knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics they need. For example, they use the school's approach to the teaching of phonics consistently well. This means children quickly begin to learn to read. Children learn effectively across all areas of learning. This means children are well prepared as they transition to Year 1.

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

Pupils are proud of and love attending Benhall St Mary’s. Caring staff welcome pupils warmly as they arrive at school each day. This helps pupils to settle quickly into class to begin their work.

Often pupils join at different points in the school year. Leaders ensure staff quickly understand how best to help a pupil who has barriers to their learning or wellbeing. Staff do this very well. This includes those pupils who face challenges towards attending regularly. Leaders ensure most pupils improve their attendance over time.

Pupils benefit greatly from a range of well-considered enrichment opportunities. These help to bring the curriculum to life. They also expose pupils to new and exciting experiences. Residential trips are a particular highlight. These trips help to build pupils’ resilience and confidence. The wider offer helps to teach pupils the important values leaders want them to know and show. Pupils live and breathe their school values through the way they conduct themselves. They also learn about other important values. For example, pupils develop a secure understanding of democracy through the way the school ‘moot’ works. This gives pupils a voice in what happens at school.

Pupils benefit from consistent approaches to promoting positive behaviour. They know this is something that has improved. Pupils show kindness towards each other. They are mature in the way they forgive each other should they need to. Pupils of different ages enjoy coming together as one to play basketball or use the climbing frame at lunchtime. Bullying is rare. If it happens, staff deal with it effectively. Pupils behave well during lessons. They want to achieve well and frequently concentrate on their work. Overall, pupils achieve well and are ready for their next steps. This includes those moving on to secondary school.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure staff use their checks on learning to skilfully adapt their teaching so pupils are better able to deepen their knowledge and understanding across subjects.
- Leaders should ensure staff consistently implement the revised approaches to supporting pupils to continue to improve their reading and writing.

- Leaders should ensure their approaches towards addressing attendance issues result in absence and persistent absence both further reducing.

About this inspection

This school is part of All Saints Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Melanie Barrow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Russell Ayling. There is a head of school, Daniel Millican.
The executive headteacher, Paul Parslow-Williams, is responsible for this school and one other.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, multi-academy trust leaders, trustees, local governing board members and pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school converted to become an academy in September 2023. The executive headteacher, head of school and most staff have joined the school since then.

This school is registered as having a Christian (Church of England) religious character. The last section 48 inspection was in April 2026.

The school currently uses two unregistered providers of alternative provision.

Executive headteacher: Paul Parslow-Williams

Lead inspector:
Michael Williams, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Cassandra Williams, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

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

School and pupil context

Total pupils

77
Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 268

School capacity

105
Well 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)

38.96%
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

14.29%
Well above 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

18.18%

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

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (final)	56%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	74%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (final)	56%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
2022/23		44%	

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%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
2022/23		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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
2022/23		59%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	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 (3 term)	10.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	18.8%	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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