

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Primary School, Brentwood

Address: Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9BX

Unique reference number (URN): 115179

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✔ 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 achieve highly. They develop detailed knowledge and skills over time. This is reflected in the standard of their work and in their performance in national tests and assessments. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are more vulnerable, make rapid progress across the curriculum from their starting points. Additionally, pupils achieve well in the phonics national check.

In wider curriculum subjects, such as history, pupils recall past knowledge very well. Additionally, they make strong links between different subjects. As a result, pupils develop a rich and connected understanding of the curriculum over time.

Most pupils have strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Over time, pupils become fluent readers. Additionally, pupils develop their writing skills very well. They improve their vocabulary, punctuation and sentence construction. In mathematics, pupils' work demonstrates increasing accuracy and fluency in calculation. Overall, pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are known or previously known to social care. Regular discussions with parents and carers help leaders identify difficulties at an early stage. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the right support when they need it. They act quickly. For example, staff follow speech and language programmes to help younger pupils develop communication skills when gaps are identified.

Leaders work closely with staff and external agencies to make sure any additional support is appropriate and effective. Regular reviews help leaders check the impact of any additional support. Where needed, pupils have detailed plans that identify their strengths and areas they need to develop. These are highly individualised. This ensures that any extra support is precisely matched to pupils' needs.

Careful review of extra funding informs leaders' decisions. For example, they identified the need for more precise mathematics support for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders direct additional resources where they are most required. This helps pupils to achieve well.

Leaders carefully monitor their use of alternative provision. This helps leaders understand the quality of the provision, determine whether placements meet pupils' needs and whether they are achieving desired outcomes. Pupils only attend for as long as is necessary.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders' promotion of pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders provide a carefully planned programme that reflects the needs of pupils and the school community. For example, pupils learn to develop positive relationships, and they learn about diversity in

modern Britain. They also develop into self-confident individuals who are ready for secondary school.

Pupils speak confidently about the school's values. They explain how these influence their actions. Pupils understand the importance of kindness and respect. They explain why people should treat others fairly. Pupils demonstrate detailed knowledge of different faiths and beliefs. They understand similarities and differences and show respect for people whose experiences differ from their own. Leaders ensure that pupils develop an understanding of fundamental British values. For example, pupils understand democracy and the rule of law. They can explain how these values apply in school and in the wider community.

The school's relationships and health education programme is very effective. Pupils develop a deep understanding of healthy relationships and personal safety. They understand online and offline risks. Additionally, pupils know who to approach if they have concerns. They rightly trust staff at school to help them.

Leaders provide highly effective pastoral support for those who need this. Staff meet individual pupils' needs. For example, pupils may have one-to-one counselling and other tailored support that helps them improve their wellbeing. For all pupils, regular opportunities for reflection help them understand how they can manage challenges and persevere when learning is difficult.

Leaders ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's personal development programme. They monitor participation carefully and provide additional support where needed to ensure that pupils can take part fully. For example, leaders identify pupils who are reluctant to join clubs or enrichment activities and work with them and their families to encourage them to take part.

Across school, pupils develop a strong sense of belonging. For example, pupils take on many leadership responsibilities. They contribute to school life and support others. As a result, pupils are increasingly community minded.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders analyse attendance information carefully. They have established suitable systems to improve pupils' attendance when it falls. They identify and work with families when concerns arise. They take appropriate action to help individual pupils attend more regularly. Despite some pupils joining the school at non-standard times, which affects overall attendance figures, leaders have reduced persistent absence over time. They have introduced clearer expectations and procedures to improve attendance further.

Across the school, pupils fully understand the rules and routines. Staff have high expectations. This means that, typically, pupils behave very well. Pupils settle to tasks quickly. They move around the school in an orderly manner. This is important because it means that pupils can focus on their learning without disruption. At break times, pupils play

happily with each other. They have learned how to manage their behaviour at more unstructured times as well as during lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils contribute to this calm environment. Pupils' discussions confirm that bullying is rare. They feel confident that adults will act appropriately should it occur. School records confirm that any incidents stop after leaders and staff carry out appropriate actions. These include working closely with pupils and families to resolve concerns and prevent issues from recurring.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders' curriculum sets out the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn in each subject. Leaders sequence learning carefully. Teachers skilfully help pupils to make connections between key knowledge. This is important because pupils learn more successfully when they connect new knowledge to their prior understanding.

Leaders accurately identify areas for improvement. For example, recent changes to the teaching of spelling and phonics reflect their understanding of the areas that could be better. These changes have brought greater consistency to the teaching of early reading and foundational skills. As a result, fewer pupils miss essential knowledge. These improvements help all pupils, but particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In writing, pupils are taught the skills they need in grammar and punctuation. Teachers model these skills clearly with regular opportunities to practise them. As a result, pupils produce high-quality written work.

Occasionally, teachers do not use the full range of teaching approaches that leaders have identified. For example, in a few subjects, staff do not check pupils' understanding closely enough. They do not address some misconceptions when they occur. This slows the progress that some pupils make through the curriculum. The school's amalgamation has taken time to embed new ways of working. However, leaders provide targeted support to address these variations. As a result, pupils' gaps in knowledge are identified and addressed.

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years gives children a positive start to school. Leaders review the quality of education regularly and use this information to make changes to the curriculum. They respond to children's changing needs. Recent improvements, including to phonics teaching, and continued staff development have contributed to greater consistency in children's experiences.

Leaders have identified the knowledge and vocabulary children need to know. Leaders sequence learning carefully. Staff provide activities that are effective in helping children to build on what they already know and can do. Staff carefully choose themes and books to provide meaningful contexts for children's learning. Experiences such as visits from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution deepen their understanding of safety and the wider world.

Leaders ensure that communication and language are central to children's learning. Staff model vocabulary throughout the day. They create frequent opportunities for discussion and

storytelling. Staff adapt conversations to meet children's developmental needs, including those who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, children develop increasing confidence when expressing their ideas. Staff identify any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. They ensure that they make appropriate adaptations to support the learning of children with SEND. Children generally achieve well by the end of Reception. They are well prepared for Year 1.

Positive relationships help children feel safe and settled. Children develop independence and manage their emotions. They quickly understand and follow routines and rules.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have successfully led the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. They have established a shared vision, which staff understand.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. When they identify weaknesses, they take timely action. For example, leaders reviewed pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. They then introduced changes to how phonics, spelling and handwriting were taught. These have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Leaders have invested in developing staff expertise. For example, leaders have provided training for middle leaders to strengthen their role in school improvement. Additionally, staff who support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities feel well prepared for their roles. They understand how their work contributes to pupils' success.

Leaders consider staff wellbeing and workload. Staff describe leaders as approachable and supportive. Most staff feel leaders respond appropriately when pressures arise. As a result, staff report a suitable work-life balance.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They know the school well. Governors work closely with leaders to support improvement. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Additionally, they maintain a clear focus on pupils' best interests when any changes are made.

Leaders and governors engage with parents and carers and the wider community. They use these relationships to support pupils. Many parents speak positively about the school. A small number raise concerns. Leaders recognise the need to continue strengthening communication with families. Leaders and governors maintain an appropriate focus on improving the school and securing positive outcomes for pupils.

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

Pupils are highly responsible. They carry themselves with confidence and are proud of their school. They help others. For example, older pupils are positive role models for younger children and enjoy helping them to create games at playtime. Each class has one or two

representatives who welcome visitors and explain what they are learning. This helps pupils to develop positive social skills.

Pupils confidently talk about the school values. They understand how they relate to them. Pupils are interested in and knowledgeable about other religions. They also talk about the school's Church of England ethos. Some pupils explain how their faith guides them. Pupils and staff have happy and positive relationships. This helps pupils to feel safe. Additionally, they are very sure that staff will help them with their learning or any worries they may have. As a result, pupils feel supported.

Pupils take part in a wide range of interesting clubs. These include choir and fencing. They also enjoy many positions of responsibility. Many match their interests, such as sporting and musical roles. These opportunities help pupils to develop their talents.

Pupils are highly responsible. They often act with maturity. For example, in the dining hall and during social times, they do not need to be highly supervised. This starts in the early years, where during snack time, children are taught to socialise with their friends and tidy away what they use. Pupils behave well and listen attentively in lessons. Pupils know that bullying does not happen often. If it does, they know that staff will stop it quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy learning. Staff are skilled at understanding if any pupils need extra help to achieve in line with their peers. They balance supporting pupils with providing tasks that pupils can complete independently. This builds confidence in pupils. Pupils remember new knowledge very well. They make connections between subjects. Generally, they are highly motivated to learn and achieve highly.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently identify and address misconceptions when they arise, in line with leaders' intentions, and provide pupils with meaningful guidance on how to improve their work in some subjects.
- Leaders should continue to review the effectiveness of their strategies to improve attendance and continue to reduce persistent absence.

About this inspection

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

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Father Mark North.

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, deputy headteacher, special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, teachers, pupils and some parents and carers. They also spoke to representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses one registered alternative provision.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Chelmsford. Its last section 48 inspection was in January 2026.

Headteacher: Dean Moran

Lead inspector:

Jessie Linsley, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Rowena Simmons, Ofsted Inspector

Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

Vicki Webber, 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 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

523

Well 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: 272

School capacity

535

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)

22.75%

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: 26.3%

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

4.78%

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

14.91%

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

Well 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	69%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	69%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	65%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	72%	60%	Above

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	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	82%	75%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	71%	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	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	79%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	36%	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	52%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	45%	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	48%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	40%	58%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	36%	58%	Below

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	55%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	48%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	38%	69%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	36%	66%	-30 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	52%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	45%	78%	-33 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	48%	78%	-30 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	78%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	78%	-38 pp
2022/23 (final)	36%	77%	-41 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	55%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	48%	81%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	60%	79%	-19 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	79%	-16 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 (3 term)	5.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	12.8%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.5%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.3%	16.2%	Below

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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