

St Paulinus Catholic Primary Academy

Address: Temple Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, WF13 3QE

Unique reference number (URN): 148485

Inspection report: 30 June 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for attendance. Pupils want to come to school because of the sense of belonging that staff promote. Attendance is in line with national averages. This includes the attendance of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other vulnerabilities. It has improved over time as a result of leaders' actions. Leaders use effective approaches to analysing and supporting attendance for all groups of pupils, including those with persistent absence. They offer suitable support for families where needed.

Pupils consistently behave well. Staff establish calm routines and structures that all pupils understand. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They show respect for each other and adults. Leaders have introduced new methods to resolve disputes between pupils. Staff and pupils agree that these methods have improved behaviour further. They also agree that serious incidents such as bullying, racism, harassment and violence are extremely rare and are resolved appropriately. The school's thorough processes, data and records confirm this. Leaders make reasonable adjustments to the school's behaviour policy for vulnerable groups of pupils where necessary. There have been no recent permanent exclusions. Suspensions are unusual. Leaders use them appropriately when they are necessary.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has a comprehensive offer for personal development. The school's approach to personal development is woven through various aspects of school life and helps to make the school a positive place to be. For example, pupil 'happiness heroes' take on responsibility for caring for others. They take this responsibility seriously and with enthusiasm. Where necessary, staff adapt the personal development offer for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or other vulnerabilities to ensure that they have the same entitlement as their peers.

Pupils learn a range of basic life skills that help to prepare them to lead safe, healthy lifestyles. Pupils can describe how to stay safe, both online and in the community. Their learning builds at an age-appropriate level over time. For example, younger pupils learn about road safety, while older pupils study complex issues such as knife crime and county lines. Pupils know that some people are protected by law because of their characteristics. They have a mature understanding of discrimination. They can also recall and discuss the importance of fundamental British values.

The school provides pupils with a range of pastoral support. Pupils speak highly of weekly nurture check-ins, which help them with their wellbeing. Pupils engage in a national community project that connects the elderly to young people. This project exemplifies the school's engagement with the wider community. It builds pupils' empathy for difference.

Pupils experience a range of educational visits. Some of these enhance their learning within the curriculum and support their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Sometimes, pupils fundraise for trips of their own choosing which helps to develop their financial understanding. The school offers a range of extra-curricular clubs. Leaders check

which pupils attend these, but do not use this information effectively to ensure that clubs appeal to all pupils.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Achievement across the school is variable. While most pupils attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, this does not translate into attaining the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6. Published outcomes in the key stage 2 national tests were below, or significantly below, the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2025. This includes for disadvantaged pupils. This means that pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

It is also the case that many pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge and skills. This hinders their achievement and means they do not achieve their full potential.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not consistently receive the support that they need to make secure progress through the curriculum from their starting points.

Leaders' work to improve the quality of education in the school has not had time to be reflected in published outcomes.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve curriculum design. They know there is further work to do to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently ambitious and high quality across all subjects. The curriculums for English and mathematics are coherently sequenced to help pupils build their knowledge over time. Leaders consider what pupils need to know at each stage of their learning, starting from the early years.

Currently, teaching is not consistently high quality across all subjects and classes. Leaders have provided staff with recent training to help them to teach the curriculum more effectively. This is showing early signs of positive impact. Leaders support staff to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. However, these adaptations are not consistently effective in helping pupils to be successful in lessons.

Many pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge and skills. Leaders understand the importance of pupils securing these. Staff generally teach the phonics programme effectively. Pupils' reading books match well to their reading ability. Most pupils become competent readers. There are some instances where staff do not quickly identify and correct misconceptions in older pupils' reading skills. Leaders have introduced a new programme for the teaching of handwriting. This is having a positive impact on pupils' letter formation and fluency.

Early years

Needs attention 

Leaders, including trust staff, have recently implemented a revised curriculum in the early years. They are now supporting staff to raise their expectations of what children can achieve and to teach the curriculum effectively. There are some early signs of positive impact.

The curriculum sets out the important knowledge that children should learn. It prioritises the development of basic skills, such as phonics and early reading and writing skills. A new approach to the teaching of letter formation and handwriting has been introduced. It is too early to see the full impact of this.

During some activities, children demonstrate success and acquire the intended learning. This is because staff think carefully about what they want the activity to achieve. This is not the case for all areas of the provision. Some activities lack purpose and are therefore not as successful in helping children to acquire important knowledge. This affects children's achievement and preparedness for Year 1.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or other vulnerabilities, generally receive appropriate support to help them to access learning. On occasion, they do not receive this support quickly enough.

All staff care for children's wellbeing and welfare. They ensure that the provision meets the statutory requirements relating to the early years.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Leaders generally have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerabilities. They have taken recent action to improve practice to better meet the needs of these pupils. For example, they have strengthened how the school identifies potential additional needs and barriers. There are early indications that this work is having a positive impact, but it is too early to fully measure this.

The adaptations that teachers make in lessons for pupils with SEND are not consistently effective. Sometimes, support is not well matched to pupils' individual needs. This hinders pupils' achievement. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils do not receive the precise support that they need to achieve as highly as other pupils in some subjects.

Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils appropriately. The pupil premium strategy is well-considered. There are signs of early positive impact of this strategy.

Leaders ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties for pupils known, or previously known, to social care. Where necessary, pupils receive pastoral support to help them feel safe and secure.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The school has recently experienced some changes in leadership and staffing. Leaders share an ambitious vision for the school. They have a clear and accurate understanding of

the school's context, strengths and areas for development. Leaders identify the right priorities to work on. These are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement and preparedness for the next stage of their education. Much of leaders' work is in its early stages. Currently, the impact of it cannot be measured.

Leaders support staff wellbeing and workload in a variety of ways. Staff are generally very positive about this. They are clear about leaders' expectations and the improvements that need to be made to different areas of the school's work. They demonstrate optimism for the school's future. Staff benefit from a range of professional learning that is matched to the school's priorities.

Leaders generally engage effectively with parents and carers and the wider community. Parents recognise and appreciate leaders' recent efforts to improve the quality of education that the school provides.

Those responsible for governance are realistic and reflective. They acknowledge that over time, leaders have not acted swiftly enough to deal with weaknesses in different areas of the school's work. This includes resolving the areas for improvement that were identified at the school's last inspection. Governors and trustees understand their statutory duties and fulfil these effectively. They contribute to the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction.

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

St Paulinus Catholic Primary Academy has an ethos rooted in care and support. Everyone at the school works together to make it a happy place. New pupils and visitors receive a warm welcome into the school community. Pupils feel a sense of belonging. Most behave well and many attend regularly.

In many subjects and in the early years, teaching has not been of a high enough quality over time. Leaders' expectations for what pupils can achieve have historically been too low. Consequently, many pupils have not been well prepared academically for the next stage of their education. Pupils are starting to benefit from leaders' very recent improvements to teaching and learning. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. However, the adaptations that teachers make in lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not consistently effective. This hinders these pupils' achievement. Leaders know that there is more to do to improve pupils' achievement. They are taking appropriate action, but it is too early to see the full impact of this.

Pupils are typically calm, thoughtful and reflective. They learn how to manage their own feelings and emotions. Pupil wellbeing champions help their peers when they need it. Skilled staff provide positive pastoral support which helps pupils to feel safe.

Records show that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that if it happens, their teachers will help. Pupils leaving the school in Year 6 are well prepared socially and emotionally for secondary school and for later life. They take part in community outreach activities, such as

road safety campaigns. They can talk about a range of complex issues with maturity and eloquence.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that they continue to develop a culture where all staff have consistently high expectations for what pupils can achieve to support pupils to reach their full potential.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff swiftly identify and fill gaps in pupils' basic knowledge and skills to enable them to make more secure progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff teach the curriculum effectively across all subjects and classes.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff make effective adaptations to their teaching to enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or other vulnerabilities, to achieve well.
 - Leaders should ensure that they support staff in the early years to design high-quality activities that will enable children to acquire the important knowledge identified in curriculum plans.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Robert Pritchard, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Antonia Dorsey.

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

Following our new inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the chair of the trust board and other trust members, the CEO of the trust, the chair of the local academy council and other academy council members, the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Leeds. Its last section 47 inspection was on 23 and 24 November 2023.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone significant change since the last inspection. The chair of the local academy council and the headteacher are newly appointed.

The school offers nursery provision to children from the term after their third birthday.

Headteacher: Elizabeth McDonagh

Lead inspector:

Abbey Broom, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Shameem Hussain, Ofsted Inspector

Steve Shaw, 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 30 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

383

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

443

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)

27.67%

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

4.70%

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

15.40%

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 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	43%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	32%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	62%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average

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	56%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	51%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	81%	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	62%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	62%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average

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	31%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	18%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	35%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44%	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)	36%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	58%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	60%	Close to average

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)	27%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	58%	Close to average

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	47%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	45%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44%	59%	Below

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	31%	68%	-36 pp
2024/25 (final)	18%	69%	-51 pp
2023/24 (final)	35%	67%	-33 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	66%	-23 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%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	81%	-44 pp
2023/24 (final)	58%	80%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	78%	-16 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%	-29 pp
2024/25 (final)	27%	78%	-51 pp
2023/24 (final)	54%	78%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	69%	77%	-9 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	47%	80%	-33 pp
2024/25 (final)	45%	81%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	44%	79%	-35 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)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.3%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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)	11.6%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	15.0%	16.2%	Close to average

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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