

St Finbar's Catholic Primary School

Address: South Hill Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L8 9RY

Unique reference number (URN): 104640

Inspection report: 15 September 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

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to achieve well. In the early years, children secure the phonics knowledge that they need to read and write with increasing accuracy. In the main, pupils of all ages secure strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are helped to catch up quickly if gaps appear in their understanding.

In previous years, pupils have achieved less well in writing. Leaders have identified this issue, and there is now a clear improvement plan in place. Although this work is recent, it is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. By the end of Year 6, most pupils now achieve close to national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics and are prepared well for secondary school.

On the whole, pupils with barriers to their learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are new to English, typically progress through the curriculum successfully from their starting points.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders take effective action to help pupils to attend regularly. As a result, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing over time. Persistent absence is close to national averages. Where individual pupils struggle to attend, leaders take effective action to reduce the barriers that affect their attendance. As a result, most pupils improve their attendance over time. However, some pupils are still absent from school too often. This includes pupils who are taken on holidays during term time. Leaders should take robust action to improve the attendance of these pupils.

From the early years onwards, leaders have established clear routines for pupils. Staff teach pupils the skills and self-control that they need to control their emotions and to develop positive relationships with their peers. Pupils increasingly use these skills to manage their own behaviour successfully. In this diverse and harmonious school community, discrimination, harassment, abuse or violence are not tolerated. Any such behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. Across the school, staff consistently apply the behaviour policy. Where necessary, they make appropriate adaptations to support individual pupils. These adjustments are effective. Bullying is rare, but when it does happen, leaders employ effective strategies to tackle it quickly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and ambitious and that it meets the needs of pupils and children in the early years. There is a clear focus on securing the strong foundations of reading, writing and mathematical knowledge for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils typically learn to read well. This results from leaders' recent focus on improving early reading. Staff receive regular training in the teaching of phonics. They model sounds with

precision and ensure that the books pupils read are matched to the sounds they know. This helps pupils and children in the early years to read with increasing fluency. Pupils who find reading difficult generally receive the help they need to catch up. Children in the early years learn to form letters with accuracy. This is because staff consistently teach and model correct letter formation. Older pupils build on this foundation to write whole words and sentences with success. However, some pupils have gaps in their learning of aspects of writing. These gaps should be addressed so that all pupils learn to write with precision and fluency.

Leaders provide appropriate training that enables staff to teach the curriculum well. Staff typically demonstrate secure subject knowledge and explain concepts clearly. Pupils with barriers to their learning, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, are supported to access the curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise giving children a positive start to their school life. They are knowledgeable about the early years and use this understanding to make improvements where needed. For example, leaders emphasise the teaching of key vocabulary. Staff interact with children consistently well to support children's language development. As a result, children learn to communicate with increasing confidence.

Leaders provide an appropriately ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum. They identify the important knowledge that children need to support their future learning. Staff teach phonics and early writing skills consistently well. This means that children begin to read with accuracy and form their letters correctly. Children's understanding of early number and mathematical vocabulary is typically secure.

Leaders ensure that care practices are suitable for the age of the children. Children are safe and happy. They enjoy very positive relationships with staff, settle quickly to routines and behave consistently well. Leaders check on the progress of each child carefully and act quickly to close any gaps in their knowledge. Staff adapt learning and provide extra help when needed. As a result, children are typically well prepared for the transition into Year 1. This includes disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These children make positive progress from their starting points.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school serves a very diverse community and welcomes pupils of all backgrounds and beliefs. Many parents who are not of the Catholic faith choose the school because they value its inclusive and caring ethos. Leaders ensure that there is a focus on the learning and wellbeing of all pupils. Leaders and staff accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those known to or previously known to social care. Leaders ensure that additional support is provided in a timely way. This includes accessing expert advice from external agencies where appropriate.

Teachers receive training so that they know how to adapt learning activities. This enables pupils with SEND to learn alongside their classmates. Support plans for pupils are carefully

matched to pupils' needs. Leaders regularly review pupils' learning and development in line with their individual targets. Generally, pupils receive the help that they need. The school provides staff with regular professional learning to support their understanding of pupils' needs. Pupils who are disadvantaged are well supported. Leaders use additional funding effectively to ensure that these pupils progress well through the curriculum. For example, leaders ensure a sharp focus on speech and language development in the early years.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school's context, strengths and areas for development well. This insight enables them to set the right priorities and take action in pupils' best interests. Leaders take effective action to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language are met. Leaders take steps to celebrate the diversity of the school community. This helps to make the school a happy place where all pupils are supported to thrive. Alongside governors, leaders strive to secure positive outcomes for pupils, especially those who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. This includes fulfilling their statutory duties. Governors understand the school's strengths and priorities. They maintain close oversight of the school through regular contact with leaders, and they have developed effective methods for assuring themselves of the impact of the school's work. This enables governors to offer appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Governors check that targeted funding, particularly funding for disadvantaged pupils, is used appropriately and has a positive impact.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive professional development programme. This strengthens staff's knowledge and helps them to offer the right support to pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and wellbeing. They ensure that staff have protected time for planning, preparation and training. Staff say they appreciate this. Early career teachers receive effective support from their mentors.

Leaders nurture close relationships with the community. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school's work. This is because leaders support pupils effectively and communicate regularly with parents and carers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an appropriate personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. Pupils know the importance of staying healthy through regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. They understand what makes a relationship healthy and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Older pupils have an age-appropriate knowledge of the concept of consent. This knowledge prepares pupils well for the future.

Leaders make sure that pupils understand the importance of reflecting on their own ideas and beliefs. Pupils understand and celebrate the differences between people. Pupils are able to discuss aspects of fundamental British values such as democracy. Leaders have established a culture in which pupils treat each other with kindness and respect.

Pupils benefit from a range of roles that help them to develop personally and socially. For example, some pupils contribute to the running of the school as members of the school council. Others take on responsibilities as play leaders. Many pupils become involved in activities to raise funds for a range of charities. These roles help pupils to develop their sense of responsibility and citizenship. Pupils are proud of their contributions. Many are positive role models for younger pupils. Leaders also provide opportunities for pupils to make a difference in their community. For example, pupils support the local food bank. These opportunities help pupils to contribute to their school and beyond. Leaders make sure that everyone is included. Pupils who face disadvantage experience the same opportunities as their peers. The personal development programme supports them well.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to widen their experience of the world, such as attending after-school clubs, visiting local landmarks and learning a musical instrument. However, pupils and children in the early years would benefit from a wider range of experiences beyond school, particularly activities that would deepen their cultural awareness.

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

Pupils arrive happily each morning at St Finbar's Catholic Primary School. They are warmly welcomed by staff, who greet them individually. This makes pupils and children in the early years feel that they belong at the school. The school's values, which include friendship and respect, underpin the positive and caring relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Leaders quickly and accurately identify pupils who may have any barriers to learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils.

Published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 show that most pupils typically achieve close to national averages in the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics. This includes pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning. There is a clear focus from the early years and throughout the school on developing children's spoken language. Many pupils arrive at the school at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. Well-trained staff provide expert support so that these pupils soon learn to communicate with their classmates, make friends and learn the curriculum. Pupils talk with confidence about what they learn. Pupils are generally well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils behave very well and feel safe in school. Older pupils are consistently kind and caring to younger children. Pupils are confident that if they needed to report any bullying they would speak to staff, who would deal with it quickly. Pupils' attendance has been below national averages. However, it has improved in recent years because leaders have worked effectively with parents and carers to address high rates of absence. The attendance of most pupils is now in line with national averages.

Pupils benefit from experiences beyond the curriculum. For example, they enjoy trips, such as to a nature reserve and a zoo. These experiences help develop pupils' understanding of

the wider world. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness or extend their talents and interests.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to improve pupils' foundational skills and knowledge across the school, particularly writing, so that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, build knowledge more securely over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that all pupils take part in a wider range of activities that broaden their experiences, build their confidence and enrich their lives.
 - Leaders have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance, and most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, now attend regularly. Leaders should build on this and reduce absences further by taking swift and robust action when pupils do not attend regularly enough.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Angela Williams.

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

This inspection took place on 15 and 16 September 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 deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, other leaders, staff, governors and representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection was in June 2025.

The school currently makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Janet Conley

Lead inspector:

Cleone Cunningham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Mike Dixon, 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

159

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

175

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)

68.12%

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

2.52%

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

20.75%

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	53%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	54%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	76%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	60%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	65%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	71%	Below

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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	47%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	58%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	42%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42%	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	77%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	84%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	56%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	68%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	53%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	47%	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	70%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	47%	68%	-20 pp
2024/25 (final)	58%	69%	-11 pp
2023/24 (final)	42%	67%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	42%	66%	-24 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	77%	80%	-2 pp
2024/25 (final)	79%	81%	-2 pp
2023/24 (final)	84%	80%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	68%	78%	-10 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	56%	78%	-22 pp
2024/25 (final)	68%	78%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	78%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	47%	77%	-30 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	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	79%	81%	-2 pp
2023/24 (final)	79%	79%	0 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	53%	79%	-27 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)	6.8%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.8%	5.9%	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
2024/25 (3 term)	20.3%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	26.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	24.7%	16.2%	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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