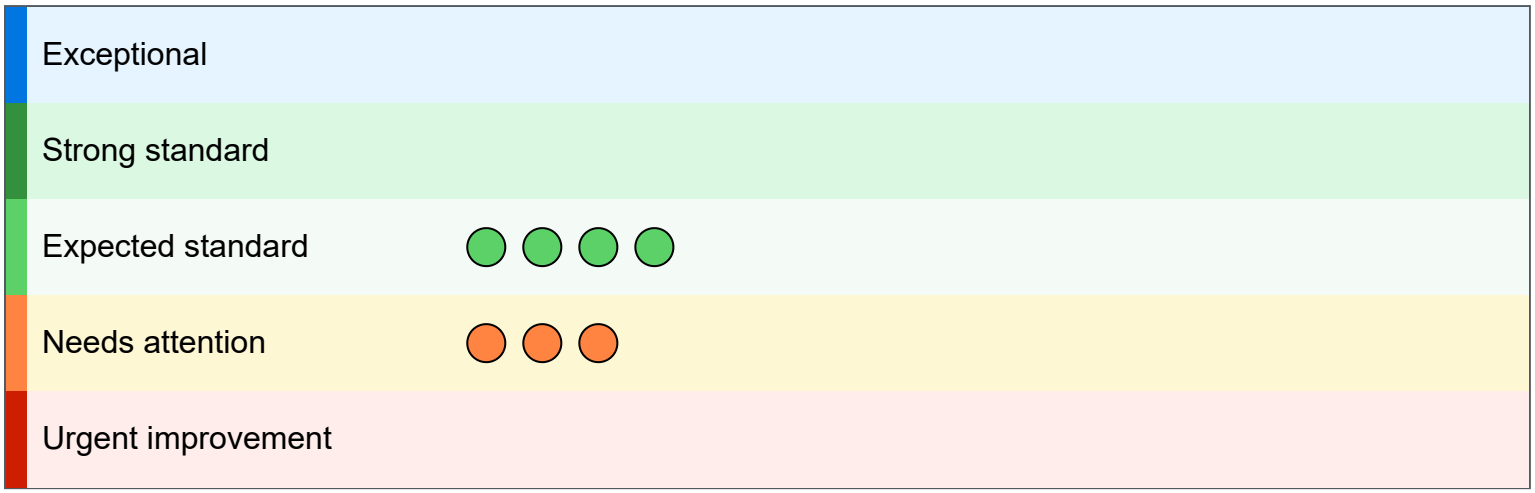
St Mary's CofE Primary School

Address: Court Orchard, Fownhope, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR1 4PG

Unique reference number (URN): 116880

Inspection report: 19 May 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Attendance has improved over time and is a positive feature of the school's work. Staff expect pupils to attend regularly and most do. When necessary, leaders work proactively with families to support them in ensuring that pupils attend school. This includes providing help for pupils' social and emotional needs, as well as practical assistance. Leaders are empathetic to challenges that families sometimes face. They are also determined in their work to promote regular attendance. The approach is proving successful. Persistent absence has decreased significantly over time. Pupils' attendance is above national levels, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils generally behave well. They are sensible around the school and typically focus on learning in lessons. This helps to make the school a calm and happy place where positive relationships flourish. Staff recognise pupils for doing the right things. Pupils' behaviour is regularly celebrated in assemblies and through school rewards. The school's curriculum teaches pupils the importance of respect for others. This is emphasised though regular consideration of the school's values. Staff are vigilant to any signs of bullying. Leaders deal with matters swiftly when they do arise.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders have revised the early years curriculum to reflect recent changes in the age of children who attend. The renewed curriculum has been carefully considered to ensure that children learn developmental knowledge across a broad range of activities. When children first join the setting, staff place particular emphasis on teaching children expectations and routines to support their social and emotional development. This is having a positive impact. Children take turns, share resources with each other and engage thoughtfully in the things they are doing.

Staff know children very well. They make sure that teaching is well matched to children's needs and abilities. Every activity is seen as an opportunity to develop children's communication and language. Through the day, staff regularly model new vocabulary to expand children's bank of words. Children often engage in meaningful chatter with each other and adults. This helps children to explain their ideas and choices. It also supports children in the Reception Year to access more structured learning in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders have ensured that arrangements are in place to promote children's safety and wellbeing. At the heart of these arrangements are appropriate staff ratios and effective supervision of children. Children trust the adults who care for them and feel safe in the early years setting.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Inclusion is central to the school's ethos. Leaders work with various agencies to ensure that their vision for all to be included is realised. For example, they collaborate with the virtual

school to provide additional help for looked-after children. Systems for engaging with these agencies are well organised and effective. Leaders' outward looking approach is helping to ensure that pupils take a full and active part in every aspect of school life. Leaders use additional funding effectively to advance opportunities for disadvantaged pupils. They prioritise support to help pupils to manage their emotions. This has a positive impact on pupils' confidence and behaviour.

The school is successful in breaking down barriers to learning so that pupils typically engage in lessons and everyday life at school. Staff know pupils well and use this understanding to identify any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They benefit from training that enhances their expertise in providing appropriate support. The small staff team works closely together to coordinate and adjust the provision. They are clear about how to meet pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers. This is successfully helping pupils with SEND to feel included and ready to learn.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have reviewed the school's offer to ensure that it promotes pupils' personal development. They have ensured that the school's personal, social and health education curriculum covers the necessary content. Staff check that this is having an impact on pupils' knowledge. Pupils learn about age-appropriate topics that help them to understand real-life situations and social interactions that they may face. They remember what they have learned and understand it. For example, pupils know how to maintain positive mental and physical health. They understand how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships. The school provides support for pupils' social and emotional development. This teaches pupils how to recognise their emotions. They are taught ways to manage emotions effectively. Staff build supportive relationships with pupils, treating them with kindness and respect. The school's caring culture nurtures pupils' wellbeing and boosts their self-esteem.

Leaders place an emphasis on pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are aware of the school's Christian ethos but also learn about other faiths and beliefs. Assemblies and visits by religious leaders help to broaden pupils' understanding of this. Their knowledge supports them in discussing a range of matters, such as the concept of right and wrong. Pupils are able to make links between what they have learned and their experiences of life in modern Britain. For example, the importance of the rule of law.

Pupils take part in activities that extend their learning beyond the classroom. These activities include clubs, trips and visits that enhance their experiences. In addition, pupils benefit from the school's links to the community. Partnerships with the local church and care homes enable pupils to take part in charitable works and events. This helps them to understand the worthiness of contributing to society. Collectively, these elements contribute to a well-rounded personal development offer that prepares pupils effectively for life in a changing world.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Some pupils have not secured the basic knowledge that they need in handwriting, spelling, grammar and mathematics. This means that they find it harder to apply their knowledge accurately. These weaknesses reduce the fluency and precision of their work and mean that learning is not always securely embedded. Published outcomes of pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 reflect the fact that pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of education as they should be.

Leaders recognise that pupils' achievement has not been secure enough over time. They have made changes to the way that the curriculum is taught in order to improve outcomes. In the early years and key stage 1 there are emerging signs of improvement, particularly in reading. Here, pupils are making more secure progress through the curriculum. They read with increasing fluency. However, these actions are recent and have not sufficiently impacted on pupils' achievement.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Pupils learn to read through the school's phonics programme. They develop mathematical knowledge through daily lessons. However, until recently, leaders have not placed enough emphasis on ensuring that pupils secure the basic knowledge and skills that they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have begun to strengthen the curriculum and teaching in these subjects. Although these actions are appropriate, they are still at an early stage.

Teachers typically provide clear explanations of new learning and help pupils develop their understanding of concepts across a range of subjects. They also make useful adaptations to ensure that pupils with barriers to learning access the curriculum. However, the checks that staff make on pupils' learning are not precise enough in supporting pupils to secure key knowledge and skills. In addition, staff do not always use assessment information effectively to identify and quickly address pupils' gaps in learning. For example, in writing, pupils are not always given timely guidance to address errors in letter formation, spelling and grammar. They are not provided with sufficient practice of writing with accuracy.

Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad range of subjects. They have carefully considered how the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the mixed-age classes. In many subjects, this approach is effective and helps pupils build knowledge over time.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders recognise the need to strengthen how effectively the curriculum builds and deepens pupils’ knowledge. Recently, they have focused on ensuring that there is a focus on the teaching of the key knowledge that pupils need. This work has included leaders revising the curriculum so that pupils are supported to build more secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. This work has led to some improvements in the curriculum and the way

that it is taught. These actions and leaders' work to monitor the effectiveness of teaching are beginning to have some impact. However, they are not improving outcomes quickly enough.

Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. They maintain strategic oversight and know the school well. Governors have systems in place to gather a range of information about the school. These systems include governors welcoming external support and specialist expertise. This guidance has helped governors to have an accurate view of the school and to fulfil their statutory duties. Leaders work closely with the local community, parents and carers. Most parents have positive views of the school and appreciate its efforts to support their children's needs.

Leaders act as positive role models for staff. The small staff team works together well and benefits from various opportunities for professional learning. Leaders encourage staff to participate in a collegiate approach to school improvement. Staff appreciate being involved. Their morale is high and they enjoy working at the school.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this caring village school. They start the day with smiles on their faces and are greeted by staff who know them well. This helps pupils to feel valued and secure. Many feel a deep connection to the school and see it as being at the heart of their community. This is boosting their sense of belonging and confidence. Pupils attend regularly and take an active part in school activities.

Pupils benefit from a community that promotes kindness and care through its Christian ethos. Pupils typically live out these values through their daily actions. They look after each other and form positive friendships. Pupils with barriers to learning are supported well by staff who help them to take a full part in school life. This makes the school a happy and harmonious place. Pupils understand the school's rules and routines. They generally behave well and speak positively about their experiences. Most pupils have never experienced bullying. They are confident that staff deal with incidents quickly when they happen. This helps pupils feel safe at school.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Classrooms are lively and pupils generally enjoy learning. However, pupils do not learn as well as they should. They do not build secure knowledge in subjects like English and mathematics. This means that they have gaps in their learning which limits their achievement.

Pupils participate in various experiences that broaden their interests and horizons. These include attending school clubs, taking part in local festivals and visiting other parts of the country on residential trips. These opportunities are helping pupils develop their independence and teamwork, while also developing their understanding of other cultures, communities and life beyond the local village.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teaching prioritises the foundations of reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics so that pupils develop secure knowledge that prepares them for future learning.
- Leaders should ensure that checks on pupils' learning are more precise and focus on identifying and addressing pupils' errors and misconceptions promptly.
- Leaders should strengthen the quality of monitoring arrangements so that actions to improve the curriculum lead to more rapid and sustained improvements in pupils' academic outcomes.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Amanda Gunn.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Hereford. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in June 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. In September 2025, the school lowered the minimum age of admission. Previously, it catered for pupils aged 4 to 11; it now provides education for pupils aged 2 to 11.

Headteacher: Timothy Milne

Lead inspector:
Jonathan Leonard, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Heather Simpson, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

92
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: 272

School capacity

120
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)

10.87%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

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

3.26%
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

17.39%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	33%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	31%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	39%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29%	60%	Below

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	65%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	54%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	48%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	54%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41%	73%	Below

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

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	38%	62%	Below

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

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	38%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘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	25%	68%	-43 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	38%	80%	-42 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	38%	78%	-40 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	63%	80%	-17 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘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)	4.4%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.9%	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)	5.8%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	20.5%	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.

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

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