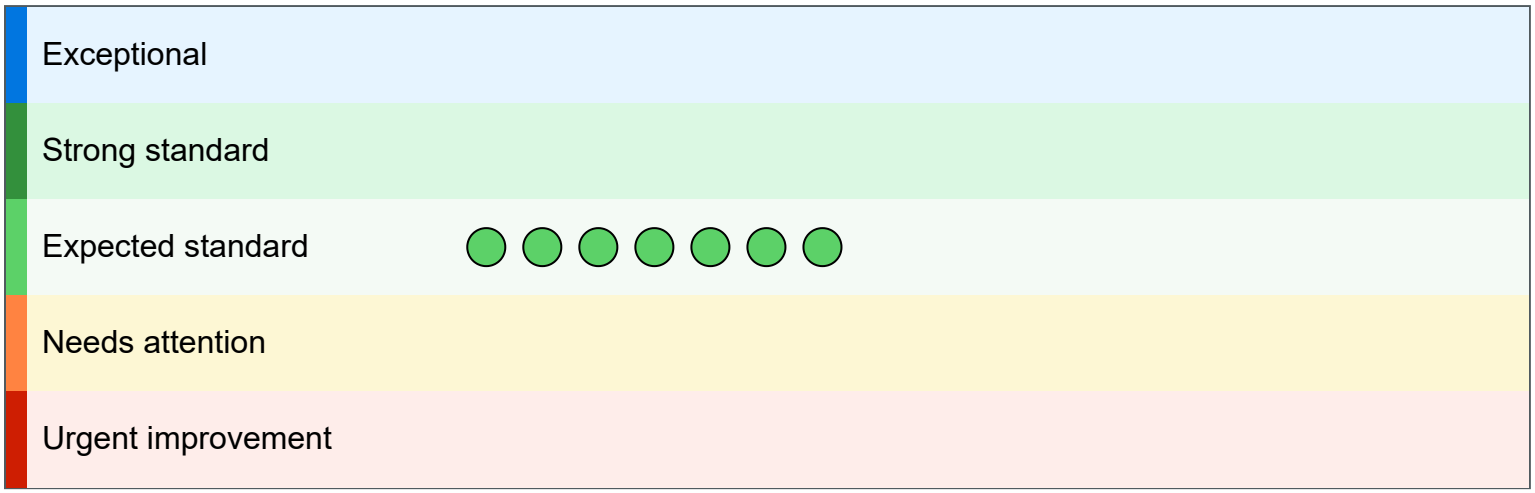
# St John's Stonefold CofE Primary School

**Address:** Rising Bridge Road, Rising Bridge, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 2SW

**Unique reference number (URN):** 119453

# Inspection report: 6 October 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

## Achievement

**Expected standard**

Overall, pupils achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make steady progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with their peers. Published data shows that some pupils' attainment in the past has been below national averages, such as in mathematics. Leaders accurately identified these aspects and acted decisively to improve how well pupils achieve. This means that pupils are ready for their next steps in education. Despite this, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could because they are not consistently challenged in their learning.

Pupils speak with confidence about what they learn and remember. They successfully build their knowledge across the curriculum, although their knowledge is not always as secure or as deep as it could be. Pupils typically produce work of high quality. However, some of the errors that they make in their written work, such as in spelling and handwriting, are not consistently identified or addressed.

## Attendance and behaviour

**Expected standard**

Pupils enjoy being part of this small, welcoming school. They attend regularly and attendance is broadly in line with national averages. In the past, persistent absence has been an issue for some groups of pupils. Leaders acted astutely and quickly to bring about improvements. They have bolstered their approach to fostering pupils' regular attendance, and this has borne fruit. Leaders are determined to ensure that this continues to improve. They have a thorough understanding of the reasons for pupils' absences. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and with families to secure improvements when needed.

Leaders' recent work to improve the school's culture around behaviour has been markedly successful. They have established effective systems and have introduced specific, regular teaching around behavioural expectations. As a result, the few incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over time. The environment is calm, orderly and respectful. Staff consistently apply clear expectations, which pupils understand and largely follow well. This includes for pupils to respect others and to try their best in all that they do. Pupils are proud when leaders and staff recognise their efforts. They know that bullying is not tolerated. Staff deal with any incidents of unkindness quickly and effectively.

## Curriculum and teaching

**Expected standard**

Leaders have strengthened the curriculum since the previous inspection to ensure that it is ambitious, balanced and well ordered. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how it is delivered. They continue to refine their approaches to successfully cater for mixed-age classes.

Leaders make sure that staff have the subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum typically well. Teachers select appropriate learning activities and provide clear explanations during lessons. They support pupils to become active learners. Teachers routinely revisit previous

learning to help pupils connect knowledge together. Teaching broadly helps pupils to secure the important knowledge that they need, including in reading, writing and mathematics. A sharp focus on reading and oracy successfully develops pupils' communication, literacy and language skills across the school. Pupils enjoy dedicated times to read and share high-quality books.

Generally, staff make regular checks on pupils' knowledge. They use this information to provide additional support to close gaps in pupils' knowledge. This ensures that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, catch up in their learning. However, some of the misconceptions that pupils have, and the errors that they make in their written work, are not consistently identified. This means that, occasionally, staff do not adapt teaching as quickly as they could to address these gaps.

## Early years

**Expected standard**

Leaders have made sure that children get off to a positive start to their early education. They have designed an ambitious and well-ordered curriculum that builds on what children already know and can do. Staff benefit from effective professional learning to help them know how best to support young children in their learning. This means that children progress successfully across the curriculum. Staff check children's learning typically well and provide effective additional support for those who need it. Overall, children develop their knowledge and skills effectively. They are well prepared for their next steps and their eventual move on to key stage 1.

Well-established routines help children to settle in quickly. Staff develop nurturing relationships with them, which means that children feel safe and well cared for. Staff engage children in high-quality interactions to support their language development and thinking skills. For example, ambitious vocabulary, such as 'enormous', is introduced and reinforced throughout the day. Staff foster children's love of reading. They support children to develop their readiness to read and write accurately, with phonics being taught well from the beginning of the Reception Year.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers from the moment that children join. Parents attend stay-and-play sessions and curriculum workshops.

## Inclusion

**Expected standard**

Leaders place considerable emphasis on inclusion in this small school. They ensure that the school is a nurturing and welcoming place for all. Pupils arrive happily each morning and benefit from a calm start at the breakfast club.

Relationships are central to the work of the school. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. They readily engage with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help that they need to succeed.

Leaders have established effective systems to identify and assess pupils' additional needs quickly and accurately as soon as pupils join the school. They also ensure that staff have high-quality training in how to best support pupils, following a step-by-step approach. This enables staff to reduce the barriers to learning and wellbeing that pupils may face. Leaders

adopt a range of effective strategies to enable pupils to learn well alongside their peers, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged.

Leaders carefully check pupils' progress across the curriculum, including for those with SEND. They assess the impact that their strategies have and adjust their approaches when needed to ensure that pupils make steady progress from their starting points. Leaders actively seek pupils' and families' views to ensure a joined-up approach in all that they do. They use additional funding effectively to make a positive difference for pupils who are vulnerable and those who are disadvantaged.

## Leadership and governance

**Expected standard**

Leaders have steered the school on a successful improvement journey over recent years. They make sure that all their decisions are rooted in pupils' best interests, particularly for the most vulnerable, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders understand the many strengths of the school and the aspects to further develop. They prioritise their actions effectively and maintain a clear focus on ensuring that pupils thrive.

Leaders ensure that members of the school community contribute to the school's development. They include stakeholders in important decisions to ensure that everybody feels like valued members of the school. For example, renewed approaches to the school's vision and ethos followed a collective effort where all could contribute.

Governors are equally proactive and invested in the school's success. They bring a range of expertise to their roles and ensure that statutory duties are met. Leaders provide governors with detailed information, which they use to effectively challenge and support leaders across all aspects of the school's work.

Leaders provide staff with professional learning that is tailored to the school's priorities and builds staff's expertise. Staff have high levels of morale. They are particularly appreciative of leaders' support for their workload and wellbeing and for the family ethos that leaders have created.

Leaders have strengthened the school's links with the local community. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and appreciate the improvements that leaders have made.

## Personal development and wellbeing

**Expected standard**

This is a school that cares deeply about its pupils. Leaders provide well for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. They nurture pupils so that they can 'grow and fly'. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a range of experiences that they otherwise would not. They work closely with families and with the local community so that access to wider experiences is equitable for all pupils, regardless of any barriers that they may face. This means that pupils are typically well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have adopted an appropriate personal, social, health and economic curriculum to equip pupils with the knowledge that they need to be healthy and safe in school and beyond. Pupils learn how to stay safe when outdoors, online or near open water. They understand how to look after their health and how to develop positive relationships.

Pupils understand the school's values and are developing their knowledge of fundamental British values. For example, they know to treat other people with respect. Pupils can name some of the differences between themselves and others, such as in appearances and beliefs. Visitors to the school, such as athletes, disabled people and those from different professions, help to broaden pupils' aspirations and their understanding of the world around them.

Leaders prioritise pupils' social development. Pupils know that staff listen to them because their ideas matter, and that they can make a positive difference to the life of the school and to the wider community. For example, pupils are members of school, faith, sports and eco councils. They support their peers as 'forest friends'.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. Pupils who need extra support benefit from tailored approaches, including mindfulness, movement, relaxation and therapy sessions. They use a sensory area to help them to relax and to be ready to learn.

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

Pupils have a firm sense of belonging at this close-knit community school. It is a special place for them, where they feel very much at home. Pupils value the positive relationships that they have with caring leaders and staff and the support and guidance that they receive. This helps pupils to feel valued and well looked after, with many saying that being a pupil at the school feels like being part of a family.

Pupils have typically positive attitudes towards their learning. They achieve well overall and develop the important knowledge that they need for future success. Leaders identify and reduce the barriers to learning and wellbeing that pupils may face, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Pupils take pride in their achievements, which are readily celebrated and showcased by staff. They are encouraged to 'have a go' and believe in themselves.

Pupils are happy and confident. They behave well and attend school regularly. Pupils understand and embrace the school's Christian values, which include showing empathy, aspiration, generosity, love and endurance. They recognise that these values are important to follow in school and beyond. Pupils respect others. They know that staff resolve any incidents of bullying promptly and effectively.

Pupils make full use of the rich experiences that the school provides to broaden their horizons. They particularly relish opportunities to learn outdoors in the school's wooded areas and to discover new places further afield. This includes residentials and visits to museums, art galleries and nature reserves. Pupils develop their interests through a range of clubs in sports, pentathlon, music, dance and art. They look after bees at the school's

beehive and have a distinctive opportunity to work towards a nationally recognised award in beekeeping.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should support teachers to consistently identify any gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge, including in their written work, and adapt their teaching to address these.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils' attainment continues to improve by the end of Year 6, including in mathematics and higher standards across the curriculum.

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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Lisa Brooke.

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

This inspection took place on 6 and 7 October 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 headteacher, school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing board, including the chair. Discussions also took place with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in March 2024.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and a new chair of governors have been appointed.

Headteacher: Paul Burns

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**Lead inspector:**
David Lobodzinski, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspector:**
Alison Dickinson, 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 6 October 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**133**
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

**140**
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)

**18.80%**

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: 26.5%

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

## 6.02%

Above average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

**Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

## 9.77%

Below average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

**Location deprivation**

## Close to 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 71% | 62% | Above |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 45% | 61% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 79% | 75% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 75% | 74% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 71% | 72% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 60% | 72% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 71% | 74% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 55% | 73% | Below |

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

## 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 47% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 46% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 63% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 62% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 59% | S |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2023/24 (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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 61% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 59% | S |

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‘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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 69% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 67% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 81% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 80% | 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** | R | R | R |

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 78% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 78% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | S | 81% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 79% | S |

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

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## 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 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2025/26 (1 term)** | 6.0% | 5.1% | Close to average |
| **2024/25 (3 term)** | 4.5% | 5.2% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 4.9% | 5.5% | Close to average |

### Persistent absence

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

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2025/26 (1 term)** | 22.1% | 14.4% | Above |
| **2024/25 (3 term)** | 10.7% | 13.0% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 9.8% | 14.6% | 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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