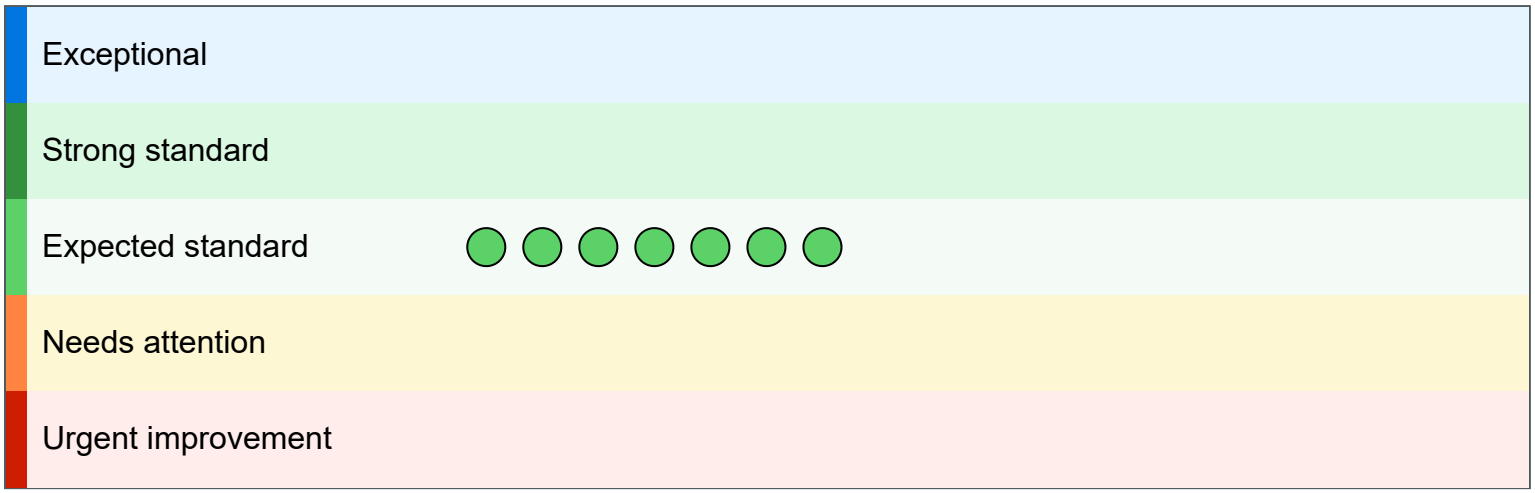
# St Mark's CofE Primary School

**Address:** High Street, Pensnett, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5 4DZ

**Unique reference number (URN):** 103836

# 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**

Although outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are typically below national averages, leaders have already taken action to enhance the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improving each year. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are steadily closing. Pupils are making positive progress through the school's curriculum.

Leaders ensure pupils secure early foundations in reading and mathematics. Leaders have identified variability in the accuracy of pupils' handwriting and are making positive steps to address this. This is helping more pupils to write fluently. In addition, pupils who need additional help to learn to read typically receive effective support. This means that, little by little, most of them catch up with their peers. Pupils across the school read with increasing fluency and are developing a love of reading.

Leaders' actions ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, make progress from their starting points. However, some disadvantaged pupils still have gaps in their knowledge of some subjects. Nevertheless, on the whole, pupils are well prepared for their next phase of learning, and where they are not, they are catching up.

## Attendance and behaviour

**Expected standard**

Leaders are strategic, and are determined to help pupils to attend school every day. They proactively support parents to overcome any barriers that families might face. Leaders also tailor the support they offer to pupils. This includes pupils who find it difficult to come to school at all. As a result, pupils' attendance is generally close to national averages and improving over time. While persistent absence remains high, effective pastoral support is making a positive difference for pupils.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well. They teach them how to live by the school's values. Teachers provide clear routines that help pupils feel secure. Pupils take part in a range of lunchtime activities that they enjoy. They play together well. They smile, laugh and have fun. They value their school as a place in which to learn and be kind to one another. Their positive attitudes help them to learn.

Leaders deal with behaviour incidents quickly. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated at this school. Pupils are supported to make better choices. Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and those with other barriers to learning have the help they need to behave well. Positive relationships between staff and pupils build trust and respect.

## Curriculum and teaching

**Expected standard**

Leaders have designed a curriculum to develop the specific interests and needs of pupils who attend. They have considered the context of the school's community and plan learning around what pupils need to know. Leaders prioritise opportunities for pupils to develop their

communication skills. This supports pupils across the school to become articulate and confident.

Teachers typically demonstrate secure subject knowledge and use a range of teaching strategies. They teach lessons that build on previous learning, focusing especially on developing pupils' knowledge in reading and writing. For example, additional adults in lessons often help pupils to improve their spelling and handwriting. This means pupils are generally well supported to make progress and close gaps in their learning. Occasionally, pupils' errors are not spotted quickly enough. This limits the progress they make.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn the important skills and knowledge they need in English and mathematics. Recent improvements to phonics teaching mean that pupils are becoming better readers. Pupils enjoy the books they read in lessons. Teachers teach a range of strategies and methods to help pupils grasp new concepts in mathematics. Leaders' actions are supporting pupils to make positive and sustained progress from their starting points across all subjects.

Leaders place pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and those with other barriers to learning at the centre of their work. Teachers adapt lessons to help these pupils learn alongside their peers. For instance, they sometimes simplify activities or provide extra explanations, so that pupils access learning. This helps all pupils to know more and remember more as they progress through the curriculum.

## Early years

**Expected standard**

Leaders ensure that children have a positive start to school. They get to know children well and quickly identify any barriers to learning they might have. The curriculum creates opportunities for children to develop their language and communication skills. Teachers use songs and rhymes to interest children and get them talking. Children enjoy learning through their play and talk to each other with developing confidence. Interactions between pupils and adults are effective.

Teachers teach important knowledge that children need to learn as they grow. Children enjoy writing and mark making. They also learn new sounds which help them to read. Children's achievement is improving over time. Routines and positive relationships help children to feel happy and secure. Teachers and staff consider the learning environment carefully, ensuring it is safe and nurturing. This helps children to settle quickly and grow in independence.

Leaders make learning accessible to children. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with other barriers to learning are well supported. Staff adapt activities so that children can fully take part. Leaders check on what children know and put support in place to help them keep up. This means that children's knowledge grows over time and they start Year 1 with confidence.

## Inclusion

**Expected standard**

Leaders know families and pupils well. They identify pupils' barriers to learning as soon as they start at the school. They have created a culture where everyone can succeed, despite

any barriers that they might face. Leaders prioritise building positive relationships with pupils and parents. This helps them to understand pupils' needs and put various strategies in place to ensure that they thrive.

Leaders work well with external agencies to help remove barriers that impact learning. They train staff so that they understand how to meet pupils' needs. Teachers adapt their lessons and give pupils extra help. Additional adults support pupils in lessons. Leaders keep a close eye on pupils' progress so that they stay on track with their learning. Staff celebrate the smallest successes with pupils. Pupils feel valued and safe. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and those with other barriers to learning make progress from their starting points. Over time, this progress is improving.

Leaders have put systems in place to support pupils who are looked after or previously looked after. These systems include staff working closely with each pupil to boost their knowledge and confidence. This ensures that pupils access the curriculum and feel safe in school.

## Leadership and governance

**Expected standard**

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school’s strengths. Over time, they make positive and lasting improvements. Leaders' work has enhanced the sense of community within the school and beyond. They work with parents to provide support where it might be needed. This approach means that pupils feel a sense of safety and security in school. They are ready to learn.

Governors know the school well. They understand how much the community relies on the school as a hub of safety and support. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively and consider leaders' wellbeing. They maintain watchful oversight of the school's development and empower leaders to improve the school further. This contributes to lasting and positive changes that benefit pupils across the school.

Leaders know that pupils' achievement needs to improve further. On occasion, leaders do not evaluate the impact of their work quickly enough, which slows the pace of change. Improvements to communication, mathematics and reading already have a particularly positive impact on pupils' knowledge. Leaders are ambitious to build on these successes further.

Leaders take care of staff and are considerate of their workloads. They train staff well, giving them the skills to meet pupils' needs. Staff are appreciative of the support they receive. Leaders' approach to staff development extends beyond the school. They share expertise widely, supporting other local leaders to succeed. This contributes to the ethos of continuous development in the school, which directly benefits pupils as they learn and grow.

## Personal development and wellbeing

**Expected standard**

Leaders have established a personal development curriculum that prepares pupils for the future. Children begin to learn this curriculum right from the start of early years. Pupils go on to learn about personal, social, health and economic education, as well as about maintaining

positive relationships as they grow. As a result of this knowledge, pupils are happy, confident and well prepared for life within their community.

Leaders ensure that pupils enjoy activities that teach them important life skills. For example, teachers teach pupils how to stay safe online and when using mobile devices. Pupils reflect on issues in the news and have age-appropriate debates about topics that influence their lives. These activities help pupils to develop confidence and respect for others.

Leaders include the school's distinct Christian values throughout lessons and assemblies. Children learn about other religions and reflect on cultural and spiritual differences. They know how to show respect, and they have positive attitudes to relationships. Pupils understand the fundamental British values and draw comparisons to the school's vision of 'Loving, Growing and Succeeding Together'. This helps pupils to be well prepared for their next stages of learning.

Pupils receive individually tailored support to help them thrive. Staff know pupils very well and use various methods to promote their individual wellbeing. Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment activities. From lunchtime activities to sports and craft clubs, pupils have many opportunities to develop and nurture their talents. Leaders track participation, and make sure that everyone, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged or who have other barriers to learning, can benefit and take part.

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

Pupils are proud to be part of this close-knit and caring school community. They receive effective support from adults that helps them to overcome any barriers to learning that they may face. Pupils feel safe in school and they trust the adults who take care of them. They enjoy learning and want to attend. Pupils thrive at the school because of the effective education and care they receive.

Pupils benefit from quality teaching across all subjects. Pupils who have barriers to their learning are helped to make progress from their starting points. Staff have a deep understanding of these pupils' needs and ensure that families are supported well. Help is always available. As a result of the nurture and care they receive, pupils do better and better each year, making them increasingly well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils show respect to each other and staff. They behave well in and around the school. They enjoy learning and engage well in lessons. Pupils also enjoy playtimes, when they smile, laugh and have fun. They take part in lots of activities that engage their imaginations and inspire their play. This helps to ensure that their behaviour remains positive.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment activities. They enjoy learning to play musical instruments and taking part in various sporting events. Pupils take part in opportunities that the school offers beyond the academic curriculum. They speak fondly about residential trips and visits that they may not have a chance to experience elsewhere. Pupils are also inspired by leadership roles, such as being librarians. They are proud to make a positive contribution to the school. Pupils live out the school's values of 'Loving, Growing and

Succeeding Together'. This all contributes to the school being a happy and positive place where pupils belong.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should continue to evaluate the impact of their work, so that they can act more quickly when an aspect of the school's provision falls short.
- Leaders should develop staff's expertise so that the curriculum is consistently taught well. They should ensure that teachers make precise checks on pupils' learning and use this information to deepen pupils' knowledge.
- Leaders should ensure that any gaps between the attainment of the school's disadvantaged pupils and the attainment of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally are closing.

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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jane Price.

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 school leaders during the inspection. This included them meeting with school governors. Inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, school leaders, staff and pupils. They looked at pupils' work and books. They also talked to parents to gather information about the school.

To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Worcester. Its last section 48 inspection was in May 2023.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Keith Rondeau

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**Lead inspector:**
Tess Sharman, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**
Azizan Kabil, Ofsted Inspector
Glenn Duggan-Seville, 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

**336**
Close to 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

**495**
Well above average

#### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

### Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

## 41.69%
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**

## 3.27%
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**

## 18.15%
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**

## 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 64% | 62% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 47% | 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)** | 70% | 75% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 49% | 74% | Below |

### 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)** | 73% | 72% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 56% | 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)** | 82% | 74% | Above |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 67% | 73% | Close to average |

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)** | 48% | 47% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 37% | 46% | 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 61% | 63% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 42% | 62% | Below |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Latest 3 year average** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 57% | 59% | Close to average |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2023/24 (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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 74% | 61% | Above |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 53% | 59% | Close to average |

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## 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)** | 48% | 69% | -21 pp |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 37% | 67% | -31 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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 61% | 81% | -20 pp |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 42% | 80% | -38 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** | R | R | R |

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 57% | 78% | -22 pp |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 47% | 78% | -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** | R | R | R |
| **2025/26 (provisional)** | R | R | R |
| **2024/25 (final)** | 74% | 81% | -7 pp |
| **2023/24 (final)** | 53% | 79% | -27 pp |

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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)** | 5.7% | 5.1% | Close to average |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2024/25 (3 term)** | 6.2% | 5.2% | Above |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 6.7% | 5.5% | 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 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2025/26 (1 term)** | 19.6% | 14.4% | Above |
| **2024/25 (3 term)** | 15.6% | 13.0% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 22.0% | 14.6% | 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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