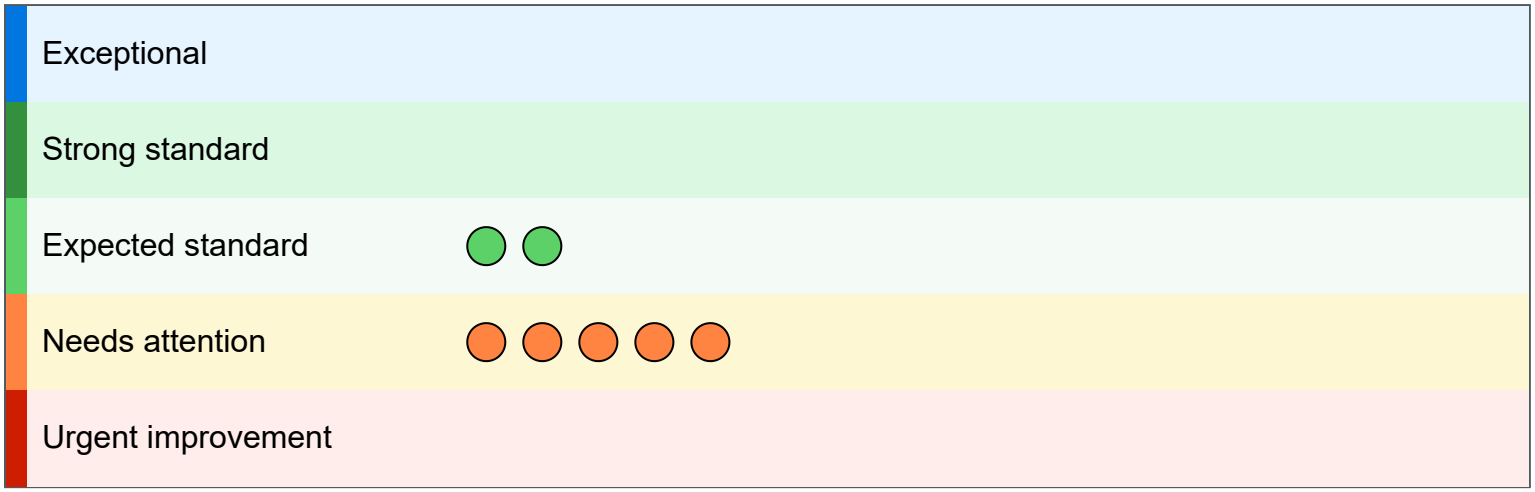
St John's Church of England Primary School

Address: Goodwyns Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2LR

Unique reference number (URN): 139721

Inspection report: 16 June 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

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance at school. They share these with parents and carers. Leaders have implemented a robust attendance system to regularly review trends and patterns in pupils' absence. They respond quickly to individual dips in attendance. As a result of these combined actions, pupils attend consistently well. Attendance rates are at least in line with national figures for groups of pupils. Leaders have worked successfully with parents of pupils who are frequently absent to remove barriers to attending. Consequently, persistent absence rates are well below national averages.

One of the first actions of new leaders was to review and refresh the behaviour policy because they recognised that pupils would not learn well if they were disrupted by poor behaviour. Over several months leaders have established effective strategies that have improved pupils' behaviour overall.

Pupils typically understand the routines and strive to meet staff's high expectations. Typically, they behave well around school and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils who occasionally need help to manage their behaviour are supported well. This means that learning is rarely disrupted for other pupils. Playtimes and lunchtimes are safe and inclusive. Bullying or discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with bullying well.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities that enrich their experiences within and beyond the classroom. Pupils participate in a variety of clubs, including in art, cooking and Lego. They take on leadership roles and engage with environmental projects in the local community. These experiences contribute positively to pupils' character development. The school's enrichment offer is coherently designed and includes a bespoke programme that ensures pupils have experiences linked to the school's values.

Leaders have established a well-developed approach to supporting pupils' broader personal development and wellbeing. It is an integral part of the school. This begins in the early years and builds pupils' understanding progressively over time. Pupils have opportunities to develop their cooperation, courage and resilience.

The school promotes pupils' understanding of fundamental British values securely. Pupils learn about equality and respect. Children think carefully about current issues. They display an appropriate understanding of right and wrong. Pupils show they understand the importance of celebrating different heritages through celebration days such as Eid. Pupils are encouraged to understand and be part of the community. For example, children sing at the nearby care home and collect money for local charities important to the families at the school.

Leaders carefully monitor pupils' participation in clubs, trips and wider opportunities. Staff provide appropriate support to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, participate fully in enrichment

opportunities. The school's pastoral support is highly effective. Staff are vigilant and quickly spot if a pupil would benefit from bespoke care. There is a wide range of well-considered interventions for pupils who need extra help. Pupils feel safe and are well cared for.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Pupils have gaps in elements of their foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics. Across wider subjects, such as art and geography, pupils do not remember their prior learning in enough detail. Such gaps hinder pupils' ability to learn the curriculum well and to achieve as well as they should. This does not prepare them well enough for the next stages in their education.

Pupils' achievements in the Year 1 phonics screening check are not as high as they should be. Leaders are aware of this and taking appropriate action. Many pupils can now use their phonics knowledge to read new words and sounds. More and more pupils are confident readers by the time that they reach the end of key stage 2. This is not reflected in published outcomes for reading.

The school's published outcomes are typically below or around national averages. The legacy of staffing changes and the associated inconsistencies in teaching has had an impact on pupils' achievement. However, pupils are now achieving better than they did due to the decisive actions leaders have taken.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Typically, the key knowledge and skills that pupils must learn in each subject are clearly set out in curriculum documents. Improvements to the classroom environment allow pupils to access help independently. Important information is displayed prominently in all classes. Pupils use this to help them to complete their work.

The school has not developed effective ways to check on pupils’ learning, across the curriculum. Consequently, teachers do not know where pupils’ learning is insecure. This results in staff moving pupils’ learning on too quickly and the gaps in pupils' knowledge are not addressed. This includes some gaps in important knowledge to support writing, reading and mathematics. The school has made recent changes to its curriculum to address these gaps for example, during lessons, teachers now revisit previous learning. This is beginning to help pupils remember more.

Staff have received the training they need to teach phonics and mathematics well. In phonics, this supports staff to make regular and more accurate checks on the sounds that pupils know. This information ensures that pupils read books that help them to practise the sounds and words they have learned. Many pupils develop confidence and fluency in their reading, writing and with their number skills.

Early years

Needs attention

Leaders have created a curriculum that is well sequenced. Expectations for children are clearly identified. These are delivered particularly well in the nursery class. However, leaders are still refining plans so that they more deliberately match the needs of the children as they move from early years to Year 1.

In the early years, children do not benefit from sufficient opportunities to explore new language and learning. There is inconsistency in the effectiveness of staff's interactions with children. This means that children do not practise the skills and vocabulary that they have been taught enough. Leaders recognise this and have prioritised children's communication and language development. Leaders have started to provide the support and training required to bring about change. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work and inconsistencies remain.

The school has created an engaging learning environment. Leaders have though carefully about the resources needed to enhance the children's learning experiences. Children in both the Nursery and the Reception classes are well cared for and happy. Staff nurture children's independence and help them understand the routines needed for school life. The school has ensured that there is regular communication with families and they feel part of their child's education.

Inclusion

Needs attention

Over time, support to address pupils' barriers to learning has not been effective enough. The trust is working with the school to review and improve the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive. Consequently, barriers that pupils may face are now better understood by staff. This work is very recent. The school's processes to identify pupils' needs are robust. However, the provision in the lessons does not consistently match pupils' identified needs. This has resulted in pupils with SEND not getting the help and professional guidance that they require swiftly enough.

Recent changes to staffing and the training given, means that staff are not fully equipped to adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND. As a result of this, even though staff have high expectations of pupils, some pupils with SEND and do not always secure the most important knowledge and skills that they need.

Leaders have a pupil premium strategy which accurately identifies barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. This includes difficulties that these pupils may have with communication and language and limited life experiences. A small number of pupils with SEND, who have struggled socially and emotionally, benefit from the school's nurture provision. This has led to these pupils successfully increasing the time that they spend in their main classes.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Over time there has been many changes to school leadership. Despite this, leaders both in the school and across the trust clearly understand the school. Some of the improvements

leaders have introduced are very recent. As a result, they have not yet made a measurable difference to the quality of education pupils receive. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and take decisions that are in the best interests of all pupils.

Leaders' plans focus on the right priorities. This includes developing staff expertise. Governors have strengthened their own expertise to better hold leaders to account. They have a clear plan for delivering sustained improvement. The actions of leaders and governors are starting to gain traction and make a difference to pupils' learning.

Time is protected for professional learning. Staff access appropriate professional development. This helps to improve their teaching. The impact of this training is evident, for example, in understanding the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Staff appreciate leaders' focus on their workload and wellbeing. Teachers value recent opportunities to develop their expertise in line with the school's priorities. Parents also appreciate the improved communication and the school's efforts to work in partnership with them.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this nurturing community school. Staff greet the pupils warmly at the start of each day with a smile. Pupils' wellbeing is a high priority. This gives pupils a sense of belonging. Staff know pupils so well. This helps pupils share their worries with staff freely. They know that all staff will do what they can to help them.

Incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are rare. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. Over a period of time, pupils have not come to school regularly enough. However, leaders have taken decisive action to improve this. As a result, pupils attend school far more regularly than they did and this continues to improve.

Pupils work hard and show an interest in their learning, but some do not achieve as well as they should. Staff do not identify gaps or misunderstandings in pupils' knowledge accurately. Consequently, these gaps persist and hinder some pupils in securing important knowledge. In addition, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not consistently get the support that they need to progress well.

In the early years, children's communication and language are prioritised. Adult interactions with children are celebratory and encouraging. However, children experience an inconsistent approach when staff model new vocabulary for them. Opportunities for children to practise their communication and language skills are not regular enough to be fully effective.

Pupils benefit from varied opportunities to explore and learn beyond the classroom. These experiences, alongside visitors in to school, enrich the curriculum that pupils learn. This is particularly true with regards to swimming, which every child does weekly in the on-site pool. Pupils' understanding of the many different faiths and world views that exist in modern Britain is well-developed. For example, through visiting different local places of worship.

Pupils have an appropriate awareness of fundamental British values, and this prepares them well for life beyond school.

Next steps

- Leaders need to further develop staff expertise in checking and deepening pupils understanding in lessons so that pupils can consistently understand and use what they have been taught.
- Leaders should embed the recent changes in the provision to appropriately support pupils with SEND across the curriculum, ensuring that the right adaptations and guidance are in place.
- Leaders need to further develop and embed their approaches to addressing gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Good Shepherd Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Kennedy and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Yvonne McLeod.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders during the inspection. Inspectors spoke with representatives from the local governing body, trustees, other leaders within the trust and the CEO from the trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.
The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery, including provision for 3-year-olds.

Kathryn Saunderson : Interim Headteacher

Lead inspector:
Neil Pilsworth, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Sam French, Ofsted Inspector
Kate Owbridge, 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 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

230
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: 272

School capacity

262
Close to 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)

38.31%
Above 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

7.39%
Well 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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

27.83%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	48%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	64%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	47%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	71%	Close to average

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	58%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	43%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	44%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	14%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	44%	Above

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	69%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	43%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	82%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	60%	Above

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	59%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	29%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	82%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	58%	Above

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	54%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	36%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	44%	68%	-24 pp
2024/25 (final)	14%	69%	-55 pp
2023/24 (final)	55%	67%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	66%	-2 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	69%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	81%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	82%	80%	2 pp
2022/23 (final)	86%	78%	7 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	59%	78%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	29%	78%	-50 pp
2023/24 (final)	82%	78%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	71%	77%	-6 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	54%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	81%	-45 pp
2023/24 (final)	55%	79%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	71%	79%	-8 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)	8.9%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.5%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.0%	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)	25.3%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	29.5%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.9%	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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