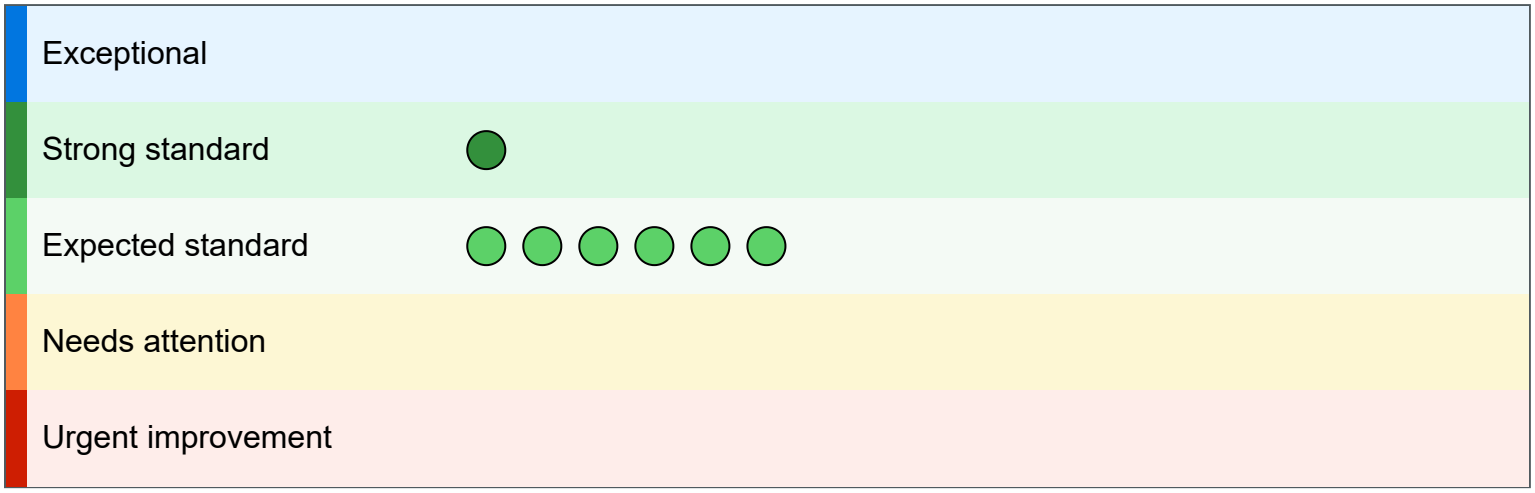
Ashton St Peter's VA C of E School

Address: Leighton Court, Ashton St. Peters Primary School, Leighton Court, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 1EW

Unique reference number (URN): 109703

Inspection report: 28 April 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.

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders' deep knowledge of pupils informs the school's personal development offer. They think carefully about the enrichment activities, wider opportunities and preparation for later life that pupils need. The resulting programme is comprehensive and highly impactful on pupils' readiness for their next steps.

The personal, social and health education curriculum enables pupils to build secure learning on important topics such as physical and mental wellbeing, personal safety on- and offline and citizenship. In an age-appropriate way, pupils explore positive relationships and their changing bodies. Throughout the school pupils recall their learning enthusiastically and often maturely, for example when discussing issues such as fairness, human rights and puberty.

Through the curriculum, assemblies, educational trips and leadership roles, pupils learn about aspects of life in modern Britain such as democracy and individual freedom. They reflect on the differences between themselves and others, for example, in terms of race, culture and religion. Pupils are highly respectful of diversity and ready to challenge any form of discrimination.

Older pupils act as play leaders, worship leaders, prefects and team captains. These roles develop pupils' character, sense of responsibility and independence. They give pupils a voice in the way the school runs.

Pastoral care is highly effective. Again, leaders use their knowledge of pupils and their needs to ensure this is targeted at those who need it most. Pupils appreciate the support available and know how to access it.

A wide range of clubs allows pupils to develop new and existing talents. These appeal to all interests and promote new ones, such as gardening, sewing and a range of familiar and less familiar sports. Leaders track participation in clubs. They use this information to deliberately offer opportunities for particular pupils or groups of pupils. This ensures that everyone is able to benefit from these wider opportunities.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

In reading, writing and mathematics tests at the end of Year 6, pupils' outcomes are typically close to national averages. This includes disadvantaged pupils, who generally achieve in line with disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders have sharpened their focus on improving writing in response to disappointing results in 2025.

In the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils achieve well, with last year's results being above the national average. Pupils who do not meet the expected standard receive effective

support to catch up in phonics.

Across the school, pupils progress well through the curriculum overall. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most children in the early years are ready for Year 1 by the end of the Reception Year. Elsewhere, pupils generally secure the key knowledge they need for the next stage of education. The quality of many pupils' work can be high, with minor inconsistencies, such as gaps in pupils' basic writing knowledge.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have high expectations of attendance and behaviour. They monitor pupils' attendance carefully, identifying any causes for concern as soon as they arise. Leaders seek to understand the reasons for absence and any barriers to regular attendance. This enables them to provide support that is tailored to each family's needs. For example, they make adjustments to the start and end of the school day and provide pastoral support for identified pupils. Consequently, attendance is close to the national average and improving. Importantly, the number of pupils who are frequently absent is reducing.

There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils have beautiful manners. Their attitudes to learning are positive and they are keen to earn rewards for working hard and demonstrating the school's values. Pupils know what bullying is. It happens very rarely, as any form of unkindness or discrimination is not tolerated. Leaders have refreshed their approach to managing behaviour. They have ensured that staff understand this and apply it consistently well. Staff mirror leaders' high expectations, while responding sensitively if pupils find it hard to meet these. Nurture provision and therapeutic activities such as working in the 'sustainability garden' help some pupils with their readiness for learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders are reflective. They review and refine the curriculum and teaching constantly to ensure they are impacting positively on pupils' outcomes. For example, in recent years, leaders have improved the mathematics and writing curriculums to drive up standards of attainment in those subjects. As a result, overall, the curriculum is well thought out. It is ambitious and designed to build pupils' knowledge progressively in each subject.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use a range of teaching strategies successfully to enhance pupils' engagement with learning and secure key knowledge. There is a focus on vocabulary and language development, as well as on the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. This supports pupils' progress across the curriculum.

Staff are skilled at reducing any barriers to learning pupils face. They make astute decisions that strike a balance between providing the necessary support and enabling pupils to develop independent learning skills.

Typically, teachers check pupils' understanding effectively and adapt their teaching if they notice any gaps. Occasionally, gaps are not addressed. For example, errors in pupils' basic skills such as spelling are sometimes missed. This slows some pupils' progress in writing.

Early years

Expected standard

The early years classroom is calm and well-organised. Leaders ensure that the curriculum prepares children for later learning in key stage one. The teaching of early reading, writing and mathematics is high quality. Staff are skilled in delivering the school's chosen phonics programme. They know children's needs well and ensure that children who need extra help to keep up receive it promptly.

During play-based activities, children consolidate and extend their learning. For example, children count and compare sunflower and cress seeds before planting them. Staff prompt children to develop their language and communication skills during these activities. They ask pertinent questions and model key vocabulary. Staff adapt the curriculum to meet children's varying needs so that everyone has a chance to participate and progress. Overall, children achieve well and are ready for Year 1 by the end of the Reception Year.

Provision indoors and outdoors offers opportunities for children to learn across the curriculum. In some areas, however, the environment is somewhat under-developed. Some activities do not inspire children's curiosity or challenge them as much as they could do.

Positive relationships between staff and families support children's confidence and sense of wellbeing. Leaders ensure that the high-quality pastoral care available throughout the school is equally effective in early years.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders ensure any needs pupils have are identified quickly when they join the school. They set up provision to enable pupils to thrive, sometimes with input from external professionals. Staff are well trained in enabling pupils to access the curriculum. They set achievable targets for pupils, and make appropriate adjustments and adaptations to their teaching. For example, staff provide practical resources and visual aids to support pupils' learning in English and mathematics.

In response to increasing numbers of pupils entering the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), leaders have set up an internal provision for a small number of pupils with SEND who find the busy classroom environment challenging. While this is at an early stage of development, the support pupils receive in the 'Bluebell room' enables them to progress well from their starting points and enjoy success. Leaders' plans to refine and strengthen this provision are ongoing.

Leaders check how well their inclusive practice is working regularly. They track pupils' progress and adjust provision, or provide further staff training as needed. Leaders use their checks to ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils, is used wisely and benefits those pupils it is intended for.

Leadership and governance **Expected standard**

Leaders accurately evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They take effective actions to address any gaps in provision. For example, the Bluebell Room for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is already having a positive impact on pupils' experiences. The impact of improvements to the writing curriculum is evident in the quality of many pupils' written work.

Governors are involved in the setting of the school's strategic vision. They oversee effective safeguarding systems. Typically, governors provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. However, the governing body is in a transitional stage, with several new members and more to recruit. There is more work to do to ensure that all governors are suitably equipped to hold leaders to account and drive further improvements.

Leaders prioritise professional learning for staff. They are keen to develop staff and ensure they have the expertise they need to carry out their roles effectively. This includes staff at an early stage of their career. When leaders introduce changes, they consider the impact on staff workload. This leads to high staff morale.

Leaders engage positively with parents and carers, many of whom are highly supportive of the school. They share good practice with colleagues in other nearby schools and network with external professionals to enhance their own provision. Leaders at all levels, including governors, ensure that pupils' best interests are served by their decisions. They are committed to providing a high-quality education for all.

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

This is a friendly, welcoming school where pupils are proud to belong. Relationships are warm, positive and nurturing throughout the school. Pupils learn about values such as honesty, appreciation and forgiveness are and are motivated to demonstrate these in their daily interactions. There is a strong sense of community and a family-like atmosphere here. As a result, pupils feel safe and, increasingly, they attend well.

Pupils are polite and friendly. Typically, they demonstrate the school's rules of 'ready, respectful and safe' inside and outside. Classrooms are calm, purposeful spaces, where interruptions to learning are infrequent. Older pupils are excellent role models to younger pupils. They appreciate being able to make a difference to school life through through leadership roles such as prefects, school councillors, play and worship leaders.

According to pupils, teachers make learning fun at Ashton St Peter's. The school's ambitious curriculum is taught well. Pupils enjoy lively discussions and collaborative activities that help them secure key knowledge. Overall, pupils progress well through the curriculum and their achievement in national tests is generally close to the national average.

Staff know pupils and their individual needs extremely well. Pupils who face barriers to learning receive provision that meets their needs and helps to remove those barriers. Pupils are encouraged to develop independence and resilience from an early age. There is high-quality provision to support pupils' emotional wellbeing, including from the school dog.

All pupils are included in the school's extensive wider offer. This involves activities that enrich pupils' learning and give them experiences they might not otherwise have. Trips to France, the seaside, St Paul's Cathedral and the nearby zoo are just a few examples. Pupils have opportunities to represent their school in competitions, sometimes at a national level, for pursuits ranging from football to horticulture.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the early years environment is designed to maximise children's learning opportunities in all 7 areas of learning.
- Leaders should ensure that the governing body continues to strengthen its work to provide robust support and challenge that is sharply focused on the school's improvement priorities.

About this inspection

The chair of governors in this school is Martin Wild.

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 executive headteacher, deputy headteacher/special educational needs coordinator, family support worker and other leaders during the inspection. They also met with the local authority school improvement adviser. The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke with a representative of the Diocese of St Albans on the telephone.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of St Albans. Its last section 48 inspection was in June 2019.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Executive headteacher: David Bower

Lead inspector:
Caroline Crozier, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Richard Fordham, Ofsted Inspector
Michele Geddes, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

209
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

210
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)

14.35%
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

5.26%
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

10.53%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	56%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	45%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	66%	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	74%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	70%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	52%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	79%	71%	Above

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	74%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	79%	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	40%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	38%	47%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	33%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	67%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	48%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	44%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	40%	68%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	38%	69%	-32 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	67%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	67%	81%	-14 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	78%	-12 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	60%	78%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	83%	78%	6 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 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	48%	80%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	44%	81%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 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)	5.2%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.3%	5.9%	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
2024/25 (3 term)	13.4%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	11.2%	16.2%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026

© Crown copyright