

St Benet's Catholic Primary School

Address: Ringsfield Road, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9PQ

Unique reference number (URN): 142786

Inspection report: 9 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

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

Early years

Expected standard 

The early years curriculum is well designed. Leaders ensure it is typically well delivered. Teaching helps children build their knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in phonics, teaching skilfully models new sounds. Children then have time to practise these. Staff correct any misunderstandings. Children rapidly develop confidence with applying their knowledge of sounds in reading and writing. They are ready for learning in Year 1.

Staff in the Reception class meet children's learning and wellbeing needs. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff identify gaps early, for example in speech and language. In learning activities, staff give children time to talk about their learning before writing. Staff ensure interactions enhance children's communication skills. This means that, generally, children learn successfully and achieve well.

There are clear routines in Reception. Children settle quickly and concentrate at the start of the day. High expectations help them to sustain their focus when learning through play. Children enjoy learning. Doing this alongside older pupils gives children access to rich learning opportunities. An example is developing their vocabulary. Children talk confidently about what they know. For example, in understanding the world, they have detailed knowledge of animals in science and Rosa Parks in history.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils who face barriers typically get the help they need. Staff receive the training they require to support pupils' wellbeing. Vulnerable pupils, such as those who are known to social care, settle well and develop a sense of belonging.

Leaders reduce barriers to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are well-considered systems to identify and review pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that support is generally appropriate and meaningful. For example, staff adapt teaching by providing word mats, visual aids or wobble cushions as required. Leaders also provide effective help for pupils' speech and language needs. Pupils with SEND therefore engage well and access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Leaders acknowledge that disadvantaged pupils have not achieved well in the past. Leaders use additional funding carefully to put in extra support. They routinely check the impact of this funding. Pupils who face disadvantages participate fully in school life. They get suitable help to access their learning. At times, the learning support for these pupils and for pupils with SEND is not as precisely matched to their needs as it might be. That said, the reason for their underachievement is primarily due to inconsistencies in teaching. In terms of inclusion, the school helps them well.

Leaders have put in place a coherent programme for personal development. They ensure this includes high-quality pastoral support. For example, vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils receive careful and effective help with their mental health and wellbeing. This enables them to engage and participate. Pupils enjoy being at school and buy into its ethos.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education teaches important content. For example, pupils learn about their bodies prior to entering puberty. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught this in age-appropriate ways. Staff adapt the learning where required for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils mostly develop detailed knowledge. They articulate a positive understanding of online safety. Older pupils confidently explain what they know about government and economic issues. Pupils describe well how their learning about healthy eating links to what they are taught elsewhere, such as through assemblies. In particular, pupils talk well about tolerance and respect. Their understanding of the school's values is typically high.

Pupils enjoy an appropriate range of opportunities. They participate regularly in wider activities, in such areas as sport and music. Trips, for example to Norwich Castle, tie closely to what they learn in the classroom. Equally, some trips, like to the pantomime, develop their social skills and understanding of British culture. Leaders ensure that pupils who face disadvantages get to join in. Pupils engage in charity work, for instance supporting the local food bank. Their views are heard, in part through the school council. These activities and experiences increase pupils' sense of responsibility and community. They typically develop positive character traits, such as resilience. This prepares pupils well for their next steps and for the adult world.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils have not achieved well over time. This includes disadvantaged pupils. In national assessments, outcomes have been inconsistent. This is evident in the results for pupils in Year 6, Year 4, and the phonics screening check in Year 1. Pupils are not sufficiently learning what they need to be ready for their next stage. A factor is pupils joining and leaving the school. Sometimes, pupils join it too late to help them achieve well.

At times, there is deep learning. In some areas, pupils learn and apply subject-specific vocabulary to produce high-quality, extended pieces of writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well from their starting points. However, pupils often do not develop the detailed knowledge they need to be successful. Sometimes, they sustain misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. This includes their key knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. That said, the youngest readers now develop their fluency quickly. Children in Reception use their phonics learning confidently.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Attendance has been low over time. This includes for pupils who face disadvantages or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This school year, attendance has improved. Leaders have added rigour to their checks on absence. Leaders and staff work closely with families to understand the barriers to attendance. The school has made helpful adaptations to its support for those who struggle to attend. This has led to some successes, such as helping vulnerable pupils attend more regularly. However, leaders acknowledge there is more to do. Absence overall is moving closer to national average, if still below.

Behaviour is really positive. Leaders have established high expectations and clear routines. Staff apply these consistently. As a result, pupils and children in the early years respond well. They are eager to learn and take pride in their work. Pupils show considerable levels of respect. At breaktimes, older pupils look out for younger peers. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated. Pupils' conduct demonstrates the school's values. For example, regarding compassion, they show a sensitive awareness if their peers discuss personal issues. Staff adapt their approach carefully for pupils with vulnerabilities or SEND. This enables such pupils to settle and feel a sense of belonging. Across the school day there is an orderly and positive atmosphere.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is variability in the quality of teaching. At times, staff model learning well. In well-considered religious education, pupils develop deep understanding. However, often tasks are not structured to support pupils' learning. Teaching in these instances does not help pupils to draw successfully on their prior learning. Pupils therefore struggle to understand the content.

Overall, leaders have designed the curriculum well. It mostly identifies the knowledge pupils need. While this is so, sometimes teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have secured the intended learning. This means pupils develop gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders ensure the curriculum teaches the key knowledge pupils need in reading, writing and mathematics. In Reception, the teaching of phonics is successful. In key stage 1, phonics teaching is gaining consistency. In some cases, pupils develop their writing skills well. For example, they learn to use a correct pencil grip in the early years and key stage 1. However, as pupils move through the curriculum, some develop gaps in aspects of their writing such as spelling. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Teaching is not always effective at addressing this. As pupils near the end of key stage 2, teaching rectifies gaps from previous years. Yet this takes time and focus that might be used for other learning.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

While new leadership has improved several aspects of the school, teaching and achievement are not as successful as they should be. Leaders continually review and improve the curriculum. They check routinely on the quality of teaching. However, it is too early to see the impact of most of this work. The trust has provided helpful recent training and support for teachers. Some of the low achievement has been exacerbated by pupils

joining the school late in key stage 2. This is when there is little time to help them achieve well. Equally, however, the trust and leaders have not been effective enough over time at addressing inconsistencies.

The trust mostly keeps a close and appropriate oversight of the school. It knows there has been a dip. Trustees and governors provide a regular and suitable level of support and challenge. This is particularly evident in areas such as safeguarding and attendance. Where the new leadership has placed its focus, this has largely seen a positive impact. Attendance has improved, albeit there is more to do. The culture and behaviour are very positive. The school is successfully inclusive because leaders put pupils' interests first. Parents praise the support the school gives their children.

Leaders helpfully support staff wellbeing and consider their workload. There is a mostly well-considered programme of professional learning. Staff report high levels of satisfaction with their experience of working at the school.

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

St Benet's is like a family. Pupils play collaboratively across year groups. They enjoy positive relationships with staff. Staff give pupils effective support with their wellbeing. Pupils typically get the help they require for special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils develop a high sense of belonging to the school. They are happy and safe. Parents and carers praise the help their children get.

Behaviour is calm and purposeful. Pupils want to learn. They treat their peers with respect. Children in the early years respond well to clear routines. Pupils are polite and friendly. They learn and embody the school's values, of faith, compassion and resilience. Bullying is rare. However, quite a few pupils have had high absences over time. Pupils' attendance has improved recently, but not enough.

Mostly, pupils learn a well-considered curriculum. Children in the early years gain the knowledge they need to be ready for key stage 1. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Sometimes, pupils produce high-quality work. Yet pupils often do not build up what they know securely over time. Consequently, they do not achieve well. This includes pupils who face disadvantages.

Pupils appreciate the quality of extra-curricular activities. Girls enjoy the football club. Trips give pupils a lot of knowledge to take back to the classroom. For instance, older pupils overflow with facts about World War II from a recent museum visit. They engage well with leadership roles, such as the student council. This includes pupils who face barriers to their wellbeing. These experiences help them develop positive character traits such as confidence and a sense of responsibility. Pupils talk well about their understanding of those from different situations to themselves. A super example is when pupils in Years 5 and 6 discuss discrimination. They describe the loss of female rights in Afghanistan and explain how this motivates them to champion these rights here. Pupils are well prepared for life in a changing world.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure teaching is effective, particularly in designing tasks that help pupils build successfully on their prior learning, and in checking that pupils have secured the intended learning.
 - Leaders should work with families to further improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - Leaders should develop the precision of their work on inclusion, so that the support for pupils is even more matched to their needs.
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About this inspection

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

This school is part of St John the Baptist Catholic Multi-Academy 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), Joe Richardson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mary Sparrow.

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.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher, other leaders, the CEO, the director of school improvement from the trust, the chair of the trust and four members of the local governing committee, including the chair.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. It is in the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia. Its last section 48 inspection was on 17 May 2022.

The school is part of a federation with another local Catholic primary school of a similar size. This is St Edmund's Catholic Primary School. The Federation is called the Catholic Primary Schools of the Waveney Valley. The executive headteacher divides his time equally between the two schools.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

From September 2026, the school intends to admit 3-year-old children into its new Nursery provision.

Executive headteacher: Patrick Kennedy

Lead inspector:

Charlie Fordham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Charlotte Martin, His Majesty's 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 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

73

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

119

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

32.88%

Close to 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

4.11%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.70%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	45%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	36%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	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)	62%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	91%	73%	Above

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	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	62%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
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)	62%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	73%	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	18%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	27%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	27%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	36%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	18%	68%	-49 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	27%	80%	-52 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	27%	78%	-50 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	36%	80%	-43 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.1%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.9%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	23.5%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	26.7%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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