

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup

Address: Huttock End Lane, Stacksteads, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 8LD

Unique reference number (URN): 119661

Inspection report: 28 April 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

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have established a school where everyone is welcome and included. When pupils start at the school, often partway through their primary education, leaders quickly assess and identify pupils' needs. Staff make sure that pupils who face barriers to their learning are supported appropriately. This helps them to feel safe and ready to learn. When needed, leaders work with specialists to understand the best ways to support pupils.

Leaders make sure that staff are well trained to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to succeed. Teachers design activities so that these pupils can generally access the curriculum. For those pupils who have the greatest needs, leaders have designed a suitable curriculum to help them achieve the targets in their education, health and care plans.

Leaders use the pupil premium funding to make sure that disadvantaged pupils take part in all the activities on offer. This includes residential trips, visits and clubs. Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision when needed for some pupils. Pupils with barriers to their wellbeing are taught to become resilient and independent. Pupils use a range of self-help strategies in lessons to help them with their work and stay on task. Staff provide the help that pupils need at difficult times in their lives, such as by supporting positive friendships with other pupils.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise the personal development and wellbeing of all pupils. As such, they have designed a curriculum that teaches pupils how to keep healthy and build positive relationships. Pupils know how to keep safe in an age-appropriate way, including when online. Learning is enriched by visitors such as the police, who come to talk to older pupils about important topics that may affect them in their everyday lives. This programme is carefully adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils are taught about fundamental British values and understand how these help people to live together harmoniously. They are respectful of differences and treat everyone equally. Older pupils talk with confidence about different religions. This is very well supported by the knowledge that they gain from carefully planned events. For instance, the school's Eid celebrations help pupils to learn about this important Muslim festival. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders provide suitable pastoral support when needed. They also teach pupils how to look after their own wellbeing. Pupils are encouraged to be independent, resilient and tolerant of others. The residential visit helps older pupils to try many activities and build their confidence. Staff ensure that pupils participate in various sporting opportunities. These include inclusive games and healthy living events.

Pupil leadership has a positive impact on school life. Pupils are proud of the difference that this makes. The sustainability club taught the school about Earth Day and, as a result, all classes signed a pledge to help the environment.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. In some classes, pupils do not gain the basic skills that they need for their future learning. Some pupils cannot write letters or form numbers correctly. In addition, some pupils find it difficult to use phonics to help them to read fluently and spell accurately. Although pupils catch up during key stage 2, these initial gaps hinder their academic success and slow their progress through the curriculum. Overall, this uneven progress across the school means that some pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The published results of national curriculum tests show that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been below average for 3 years. However, these results do not account for the high proportion of pupils who enter the school midway through their education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well towards their individual goals. This is because of the carefully designed learning programmes that meet their wellbeing and learning needs.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Pupils' attendance rates remain low. Many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some pupils miss too much of their learning, which leads to gaps in their knowledge. This hinders them from achieving well. Leaders carefully analyse information about absences. They understand the barriers that some families face and try to support them to get their children into school. Due to these strategies, some individual pupils' attendance has improved in recent times.

Most pupils behave well and care for each other. This is because of the well-established rules and routines. Pupils respond positively to the reward systems that staff use. For example, pupils enjoy the 'seeds and gardeners' project and being playground leaders. However, some pupils do not behave as well as leaders expect. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who are suspended from school for short periods of time is not reducing. Typically, pupils are kind to each other. They value each other as unique individuals and are respectful of differences. Bullying is not tolerated and, if it does occur, it is dealt with effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

In some year groups, the curriculum is not delivered as well as it should be. Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum to enable pupils to learn more over time in different subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. However, some staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. In addition, teachers do not pay close enough attention to the gaps in pupils' basic skills, especially their writing skills. At times, teachers carry on teaching curriculum content without ensuring that pupils have secured this key knowledge.

Typically, staff have the subject knowledge to teach confidently. They are well trained to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some teachers are well equipped to use assessment strategies to check on pupils' learning. This enables these teachers to adjust their teaching to help pupils, including those who arrive midway through the school year, to catch up by the time they reach Year 6.

Leaders have an accurate insight into the shortcomings within the teaching of the curriculum. They have begun to take action to bring about improvement, but this is at an early stage of development.

Early years

Needs attention 

Leaders have designed an ambitious programme of learning for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. However, this is not taught consistently well. Staff do not have high enough expectations of what children should be able to do by the time they leave the early years. This means that children do not learn all that they should across all areas of learning. This is especially true in terms of early writing and reading. Children make inconsistent progress when it comes to writing letters and forming numbers correctly. They are not helped quickly enough when they are making mistakes. Some children do not gain a secure knowledge of the sounds that letters represent. This hinders them from becoming confident readers.

Typically, children benefit from high-quality interactions with staff about their learning. This helps to build their communication skills and develop their understanding of the world. Children's personal development is prioritised. Children are taught how to play well together and to take turns. They learn to be independent, and most can manage their own needs well. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported so that they can join in with their friends. Many children behave well.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders, including governors, understand the school and its pupils well. They broadly understand what aspects of the school need further development. However, their actions to bring about improvement in some areas are in the early stages of implementation. The systems to check on the quality of teaching have not enabled leaders to fully resolve the variability in how the curriculum is delivered.

Governors meet their statutory duties. They receive regular and appropriate training. However, they do not provide sufficient challenge to leaders. For instance, they do not check the impact of the pupil premium strategy to make sure that disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from additional funding, nor do they check that the curriculum is making a difference to pupils' achievement.

Leaders and governors prioritise staff's wellbeing and workload effectively. Staff appreciate this consideration and they feel valued for their work. They benefit from a programme of professional development and specialist guidance and expertise when needed. This has had a positive impact in how staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders build positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. Pastoral support and nurture are prioritised so that pupils feel safe and know that they belong in the school.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. They feel well cared for and safe. Pupils are warmly greeted each morning by staff. These positive relationships help pupils to settle quickly into the routines of the day. Pupils generally behave well, because most understand and respect the school rules. However, a few pupils do not behave as well as they should. When bullying happens, it is dealt with appropriately. Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This makes it difficult for them to keep pace with the curriculum.

Most pupils enjoy their learning. They say that this is because the curriculum is interesting and teachers find ways to make learning fun. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because their journey through the curriculum is uneven. Some children do not secure the foundations for later learning in the early years. These gaps in their knowledge are not addressed well enough as they move up through school. Consequently, some pupils are not ready for the next stage of their learning. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities typically learn what they should. This is because staff adjust their teaching to make sure that these pupils receive the support that they need.

Leaders arrange visits to enrich pupils' knowledge, such as watching an orchestra perform and visiting local museums. Pupils benefit from a variety of clubs. These include baking, boxing and football. Most older pupils are good role models for their younger peers. They are proud of the leadership roles that they hold, such as acting as prefects, digital leaders and playground leaders.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop the expertise of staff in early years to deliver the curriculum with a particular focus on early reading and writing so that children move into Year 1 with secure foundations for future success.

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is taught consistently well so that pupils learn all that they should from the start of their education and do not have to catch up as they get older.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers identify and remedy weaknesses in pupils' writing knowledge, so that they develop fluency and can write accurately across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should continue to build on their strategies to promote regular attendance so that absence levels reduce over time.
 - Leaders, including governors, should improve their oversight of the curriculum and the quality of teaching, allowing them to take timely action to address weaknesses.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jacquie Williams.

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. They also spoke with representatives from the governing body, the local authority, the school's improvement advisor and the Diocese of Salford.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The headteacher was appointed after the last Ofsted inspection.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Salford. The school's previous section 48 inspection of schools with a religious character took place in July 2024.

The school makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Michelle Scott

Lead inspector:

Kathryn Pym, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Elizabeth Stevens, 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

132

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

145

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)

60.66%

Well 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

4.55%

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

37.12%

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

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	28%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	14%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	60%	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	51%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	52%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	73%	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	28%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	14%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	71%	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	46%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	43%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	73%	Below

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	24%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	17%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0%	44%	Below

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	44%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	50%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	30%	60%	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	24%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	17%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0%	58%	Below

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	41%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	58%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20%	59%	Below

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	24%	68%	-44 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	69%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	17%	67%	-51 pp
2022/23 (final)	0%	66%	-66 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	44%	80%	-35 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	30%	78%	-48 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	24%	78%	-54 pp
2024/25 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	17%	78%	-61 pp
2022/23 (final)	0%	77%	-77 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	41%	80%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	58%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	42%	79%	-38 pp
2022/23 (final)	20%	79%	-59 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)	6.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	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)	19.0%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	26.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	23.9%	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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