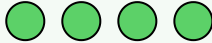



Blackfordby St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Address: Off Main Street, Blackfordby, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 8AB

Unique reference number (URN): 145084

Inspection report: 21 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

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

There have been many unavoidable changes in staffing and leadership at the school in recent years. This has resulted in an unsettled period of teaching. As a result, pupils have not gone on to achieve as highly as they should. However, the situation has now largely settled and teaching, on the whole, is much improved.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They help pupils to remember what they have learned. They check carefully in lessons to make sure that pupils are keeping up. They typically identify and address any gaps in pupils' prior learning. They make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils, get the help that they need to keep up in lessons.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching they provide. They offer well-targeted support that continues to drive and improve quality. They regularly work closely with teachers in classrooms to bring about improvements. Further staff training is well designed.

The school's curriculum is meticulously planned and sequenced. Content builds cumulatively over time. Across all subjects, the curriculum makes clear what pupils are expected to know and remember. Pupils recall what they have learned more recently with increased fluency.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. Early years leaders have ensured that, despite changes in staffing, children continue to have a positive experience and are taught well.

The early years curriculum is meticulously organised. It makes clear the precise things that children are expected to know and do at each stage during the Reception Year. Children typically remember what they have learned. For example, one group of children explained clearly how flour and yeast are needed to make bread, and that it is important to knead the dough. This reflects precisely what the curriculum says.

The curriculum is taught well. Staff in the early years have appropriate subject knowledge. Their interactions with children are purposeful and extend learning effectively. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills. Staff encourage children to speak in full sentences and support them to learn and use new and unfamiliar vocabulary. This is well supported by a carefully chosen range of books and stories.

Children are well cared for. Staff are alert to children's emotional wellbeing. Those who are upset, unhappy or struggling are quickly supported, and helped over time to grow in confidence.

Leaders check regularly that children are keeping up with the curriculum. Those who begin to fall behind receive timely support to catch up. As a result, outcomes have improved

steadily. Children are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Recently appointed school leaders have got to know the school quickly. They know what is working well and where strengths lie. In a relatively short period of time, they have brought about significant improvements, including in how well pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are assessed and supported. They have improved behaviour, teaching and, while not yet fully complete, have stabilised staffing. Leaders have a clear and determined vision for the school to provide the best possible education for pupils and for the school to be at the heart of its community. Staff share this vision and determination.

The school is ably supported by the trust. The trust has taken decisive action to ensure that the school has the resources it needs to improve. It has an accurate view of the school's performance. The work of those responsible for governance is systematic and well organised. Trustees provide a good balance of challenge and support.

Overall, staff are proud to work at the school. They value the team ethos and the care shown to pupils. Staff report that workload, while busy, is considered appropriately by leaders. They receive the training and support needed to carry out their roles with confidence.

Parental views are mixed. Some praise the small, family feel of the school and say that pupils are happy. However, too many parents raise concerns about communication and how well they are included in the day-to-day life of the school. Leaders have begun to address these concerns, but this work is still in its infancy. Leaders recognise that there is still much to do in this regard.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

All pupils benefit from a well-organised personal development offer. They are helped to become confident, respectful and considerate individuals. They say that the school is a friendly place where people are polite and welcoming. They value difference and show respect for one another. As one pupil explained, 'We don't judge a book by its cover.'

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well organised. It includes relationships education, health education and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Content builds logically over time. Pupils revisit and deepen their understanding as they move through the school. Local and national news stories are considered in assemblies. This further supports pupils' understanding of current issues and fundamental British values. Pupils learn strategies to support their mental health, including the importance of physical activity and breathing exercises. They learn to understand and manage their feelings and emotions. They have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe, including when online.

Pupils understand the importance of treating others with respect and are clear that discrimination and racism are unacceptable. They show positive attitudes towards people from different backgrounds. They understand that families and communities can be different.

Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as through the school council, sports ambassadors and the Christian ethos group. Pupils are proud of these roles. They take them seriously.

Pupils benefit from a range of wider experiences, including visits to places of worship and activities with other schools from the multi-academy trust. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these opportunities. There are some extra-curricular activities on offer. Leaders ensure that all pupils can access these. They plan to broaden this offer.

The school provides effective pastoral support. Those who need additional help receive expert support. The school checks closely how well this support is working. It makes changes quickly where necessary.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils' achievement, as reflected in national assessments at the end of key stage 2, is variable and, in some areas, not high enough. In mathematics, over the last three years, pupils have achieved significantly lower than pupils nationally. Across the full range of national assessments, disadvantaged pupils have consistently performed significantly below pupils nationally.

Targets set for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have, until very recently, not been specific enough. As a result, from their starting points, these pupils have not achieved as well as they should.

Recent improvements in teaching and in the quality of the provision for pupils with SEND means that achievement is now improving. Current pupils are achieving more positively. However, leaders rightly acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Too many pupils miss too much school. Rates of attendance at the school have been significantly lower than that seen nationally for the last three years. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have begun to address this and there are some green shoots of improvement. The school has strengthened the systems for tracking and monitoring rates and patterns of behaviour. It provides increased challenge and support for pupils and their families. When the school intervenes, there is demonstrable improvement.

Leaders have revisited and refreshed the school's behaviour policy. It is working well. Behaviour in classes and around the school is typically positive. Pupils get on well with one another. They enjoy each other's company at social times. Older pupils are positive role models for younger ones. They hold doors open and, in most cases, use exemplary

manners. In lessons, pupils typically pay close attention to their teachers and follow instructions promptly.

Bullying is rare. Pupils know the different forms that it can take. They know who to go to if they need help or support. Pupils who struggle to live up to the school's expectations receive the help they need. Over time, their behaviour improves.

In previous years, rates of suspension have been too high. As the school has strengthened the way it identifies and provides for pupils' needs, including those with SEND, suspension rates have significantly reduced this year.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Although quickly improving, support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been inconsistent. The targets that have been set for these pupils lack precision. They do not make clear the small steps of improvement that pupils are expected to make in the short and medium term. As such, the school has not been able to check how well these pupils achieve over time. Recently appointed leaders have quickly identified this and started to tackle the issue with rigour. Pupils' needs are now being identified more quickly and accurately. However, there is more to do to ensure that this is consistent across the school.

The school's strategy for supporting disadvantaged pupils lacks rigour. While it correctly identifies the barriers that these pupils may face, it does not make clear how the initiatives it contains will be measured. As such, the school cannot be sure that the actions it takes are bringing about the desired improvements. Some staff are not familiar with the school's strategy, nor the role that they are expected to play within it. Again, leaders recognise this and have begun to address it.

Alternative provision is used appropriately. The school carries out the necessary checks and assurances to make sure that this works well.

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

Blackfordby St Margaret's is a relatively small school with a strong family feel. Pupils are happy, behave positively and get on well with one another. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful.

Pupils behave well. They are taught what positive behaviour looks like. They understand the importance of 'fantastic walking' and 'following instructions first time, every time, everywhere from everyone'. Pupils enjoy earning recognition points and are proud of the achievements celebrated in Friday celebration assemblies. They understand the consequences of poor behaviour. When behaviour is not good enough, adults deal with it quickly and effectively.

Pupils work hard in lessons and show impressive concentration and determination. However, overall, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. Outcomes in national assessments have been too low for too long. In addition, disadvantaged pupils do

not achieve as well as their peers. Their outcomes have also been too low over time. Some of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), although improving rapidly, is not as good as it should be.

Pupils feel safe. They know who to speak to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They say that bullying is exceptionally rare.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values and protected characteristics. They understand what discrimination is and are adamant that it cannot be tolerated. As one pupil summed up, 'We treat people how we want to be treated.'

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to ensure that the plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are consistently specific and used to check how well these pupils achieve.
 - Leaders should ensure that the pupil premium strategy sets out how the impact of the actions taken will be measured. They should ensure that all staff understand their role within the strategy.
 - Leaders should continue to raise achievement in mathematics so that pupils do at least as well as pupils nationally.
 - Leaders should ensure that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils improves so that it is not significantly different to that seen nationally.
 - Leaders should continue to tackle absences so that attendance rates are closer to national averages.
 - Leaders should continue to address, where appropriate, parental concerns about communication and how well they are included in the day-to-day life of the school.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of Rise multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dave Ellison-Lee, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Adshead. The school has an executive headteacher, Ashley Izzard-Snape, who is responsible for this and one other school.

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 HMIs.

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, trust leaders, groups of staff and pupils, and a representative of the board of trustees. Inspectors spoke to parents informally outside and considered a written letter from a parent.

The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in May 2025.

The school has undergone significant changes since the last inspection. There have been several changes in staffing and senior leadership. The current headteacher took up post in September 2025. The executive headteacher took up post in January 2026.

Headteacher: Alison Benson

Lead inspector:

Vic Wilkinson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andrew Lakatos, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

100

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

105

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)

23.00%

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

1.00%

Below 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

18.00%

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	46%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	40%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44%	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	71%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	61%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	60%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	51%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	40%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	44%	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	17%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	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	33%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	25%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	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	25%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	59%	Below

'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	17%	68%	-51 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 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	33%	80%	-46 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 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	25%	78%	-53 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	17%	77%	-61 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	25%	80%	-55 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	79%	-63 pp

'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 (2 term)	7.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.5%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.0%	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 (2 term)	23.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	25.6%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.0%	16.2%	Close to average

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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