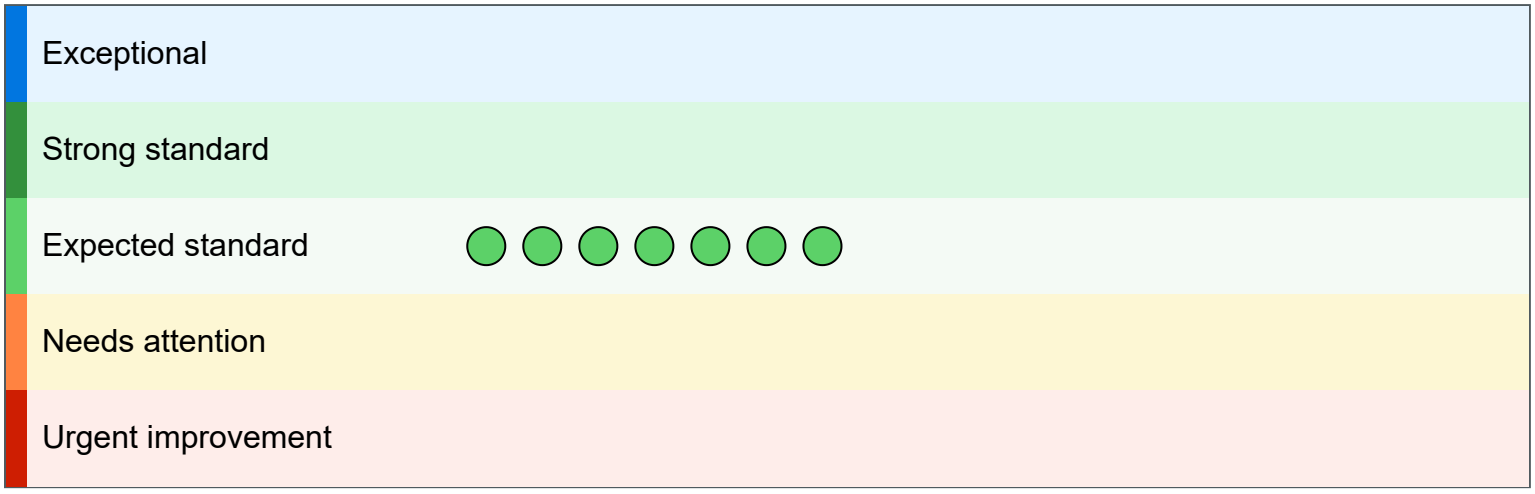
# St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hatfield Broad Oak

**Address:** Hatfield Broad Oak, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM22 7HH

**Unique reference number (URN):** 115178

# Inspection report: 10 February 2026




## Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

# Expected standard

## Achievement

**Expected standard**

Pupils progress appropriately as they move through the school. This is supported by a well-sequenced curriculum that helps pupils build knowledge step by step. Reading is a particular strength. Phonics is taught consistently well. The youngest and least confident pupils use their sounds effectively, showing growing fluency and pride. Work in books shows clear progress in handwriting, spelling and early mathematics skills. Pupils become increasingly confident in using practical equipment to solve problems independently.

Because the school has very small year groups, national test results can vary widely from year to year. This does not always reflect the progress pupils make. Leaders' targeted support, daily practice routines and early help for new arrivals are helping to close gaps. Ongoing practice of the important, key skills ensures pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

## Attendance and behaviour

**Expected standard**

Attendance is an ongoing focus for leaders. In such a small school, just a few individual cases can significantly impact overall figures. Leaders know every case in detail. They work closely with families through meetings, personalised support, soft start routines and partnerships with external agencies. These approaches are improving attendance for many pupils, particularly for those who were previously persistently absent. Leaders communicate clearly about the importance of regular attendance and act quickly when concerns arise. Their continued focus is having a positive impact on pupils' attendance. However, for pupils to benefit fully from school life, they need to attend every day.

The school is a calm, welcoming and respectful place. Pupils behave well and feel safe. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive. Pupils show kindness, cooperation and pride in their work. Staff apply the behaviour policy fairly and consistently. Pupils say adults deal with any concerns quickly. Pupils report that bullying does not happen here. Pupils show secure attitudes to learning, settle quickly in lessons and understand how to treat others with respect. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, thoughtful adjustments help them remain engaged and successful. This caring culture helps pupils build confidence and feel secure throughout the school day.

## Curriculum and teaching

**Expected standard**

Leaders have developed a curriculum designed to give every pupil the knowledge and skills they need for their next stage of education. Leaders have a secure understanding of what high-quality learning should look like. They have made significant improvements, introducing well-structured approaches in phonics, English, mathematics and science. These approaches ensure that learning is well sequenced and builds securely year on year.

Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to deliver lessons that are clear, engaging and purposeful. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised across the school. There is a particular focus on securing early reading through high-quality phonics and helping pupils

catch up quickly where gaps are identified. Older pupils receive teaching that supports both the consolidation of core knowledge and preparation for the expectations of secondary school. However, on occasion, checks on pupils' learning are not as precise as they could be. As a result, some gaps in learning are not addressed as quickly as they should.

Staff adapt learning effectively for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for pupils who are disadvantaged. This ensures that high expectations are maintained while barriers are reduced. Support is monitored so leaders can check that it is having the right impact.

## Early years

**Expected standard**

The school's early years provision gives children a calm, purposeful and nurturing start to school. Staff know the children well and interact with them in ways that build confidence, language and curiosity. Adults model rich vocabulary throughout the day during play, creative activities and outdoor learning. This helps children develop effective communication skills. They gently extend children's sentences, introduce new words and encourage them to talk about what they are doing.

The curriculum is carefully designed to support every child's progress across all areas of learning. Creative projects linked to stories and artists give children fun, meaningful ways to learn. Phonics is a high priority in the Reception Year, and teachers deliver this expertly. Children quickly learn to recognise sounds, blend words and begin reading with growing confidence. Ongoing assessments help staff identify gaps early and put the right support in place.

Children become increasingly independent, confident and ready for Year 1. They follow routines well, settle quickly and show real enthusiasm for learning. Positive partnerships with parents and carers support this progress. Staff share information, celebrate children's achievements and work closely with families to provide the best start possible. Early years is a warm, vibrant and highly supportive environment where every child can blossom.

## Inclusion

**Expected standard**

Inclusion is at the heart of the school's ethos. There is a culture where every child, whatever their needs or background, can learn, feel valued and take part fully in school life. Pupils' needs are identified early through observation, assessment and conversations with families. This helps teachers to understand exactly what support each pupil requires.

All staff work to reduce barriers to learning through well-designed support. This includes tailored timetables, social stories, sensory resources and targeted adult guidance. Additional help is reviewed to check it is making a real difference. Pupils are encouraged to become increasingly independent. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure support is well matched and effective.

Staff receive ongoing training to support a range of pupil needs, recognising that every pupil is unique. This training includes approaches that help pupils manage their emotions. Staff build positive relationships with families, particularly those who may need extra help. The

school uses pupil premium funding to provide additional academic support, enrichment and practical help where needed.

Pupils feel understood, supported and confident. Staff know pupils extremely well. This ensures that every child, regardless of their needs, has the opportunity to blossom.

## Leadership and governance

**Expected standard**

The school benefits from effective leadership that places pupils at the heart of every decision. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have taken decisive steps to raise standards, most notably by redesigning the curriculum so it is well sequenced, ambitious and better suited to mixed-age classes. They work closely with the local authority and external partners to keep improving teaching, assessment and inclusion. This ensures pupils receive the right support at the right time.

Leaders also prioritise high-quality professional development for staff. This includes training in areas such as phonics, special educational needs and/or disabilities, behaviour and curriculum development. This has strengthened teachers' confidence and expertise. Staff speak positively about the support they receive and feel that leaders genuinely care about their wellbeing and workload. This has helped to create a motivated, settled team that works together with shared purpose.

Governance has strengthened considerably. The governing body understands its responsibilities well and provides both challenge and support to school leaders. Governors visit the school to check key information such as safeguarding, curriculum quality and finances. They maintain a clear focus on ensuring that decisions reflect what is best for pupils. They are fully committed to the school and are determined in their drive for improvement. This ensures that every child feels safe, supported and able to thrive.

Parents, pupils and staff overwhelmingly speak positively about the direction of the school and the impact leadership is having on the children's education.

## Personal development and wellbeing

**Expected standard**

The school's personal development and wellbeing offer underpins the school's values of respect, wisdom, love and forgiveness. Through personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils learn about relationships, equality, healthy choices and respect. They also learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the local community. Pupils understand British values such as fairness, democracy and respect. They display these values every day through their behaviours. Pupils develop secure social skills through mixed-age buddy groups and leadership roles, including house captains, sports captains and play leaders. These roles help to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences. They speak excitedly about their outdoor learning. Here, they take part in activities such as rope making, climbing trees and cooking hot drinks and marshmallows over a fire. These experiences build confidence, independence and teamwork. Trips, such as to Stansted Mountfitchet or food-making workshops, are also highlights. These give pupils hands-on opportunities to explore the wider world and broaden

their horizons. Creative clubs, music lessons, sports events and gardening broaden pupils' cultural understanding and are made accessible to all, including disadvantaged pupils.

The school's positive community spirit further enhances pupils' wellbeing. Kindness projects, such as planting flowers, painting stones for neighbours and taking part in village events, help pupils understand their role in the community. They feel proud of their contribution. While pupils enjoy learning and remember activities vividly, some pupils do not always develop deeper understanding in certain topics. In particular, key themes in PSHE have not always been covered in sufficient depth. As a result, some pupils cannot always confidently explain the underlying concepts or use the related vocabulary accurately and securely.

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

Pupils enjoy their learning. They benefit from a curriculum that is carefully designed to help them progress well and with confidence. From the start of their journey, they are taught through rich early learning experiences with a sharp focus on communication and language. As they move through the school, teachers prioritise skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This is complemented by wider curriculum activities that further enrich pupils' learning.

Pupils feel they belong here. They talk warmly about the relationships they have with teachers and friends. They say that they feel known and valued as individuals. Mixed-age playtimes and lunchtime routines help pupils form secure friendships across the school. There are plenty of opportunities to take on leadership roles such as play leaders, house captains and members of the school council. These roles help pupils develop responsibility, teamwork and confidence.

All pupils are fully included in school life through carefully tailored support and routines. They also enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as forest school, sports events, music lessons, clubs and memorable educational visits. These broaden their horizons and help bring learning to life.

Pupils thrive because they feel safe, supported and respected. Behaviour across the school is calm and positive. Pupils say bullying does not happen here. They learn how to keep themselves safe, especially online, and they know there are trusted adults they can talk with. Although attendance rates can fluctuate due to the small size of the school, leaders work closely with families to help pupils attend regularly. Through leadership roles and positive links with the community, pupils develop confidence, empathy and a sense of responsibility. These skills prepare them well for life beyond primary school.

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## Next steps

• Leaders should continue to drive improvements in pupils' attendance so that overall attendance rises above national averages for all pupils.
• Leaders should ensure that the personal, social and health education curriculum provides

greater depth so that pupils can understand key themes securely and make meaningful connections to the world around them.
• Leaders should ensure that assessment is used more effectively to identify gaps in learning and to inform teaching across the curriculum.

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## About this inspection

The headteacher of this school is Ruth Baugh.

The school is part of a federation called The Federation of Little Hallingbury, St Mary's Hatfield Broad Oak and White Notley Church Schools.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with members of the schools leadership team and the local authority, and a representative from the Diocese.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Ruth Baugh: Executive headteacher

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**Lead inspector:**
Louise Cooper, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspector:**
Gina Bailey, 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 10 February 2026

## School and pupil context

**Total pupils**

## 45
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**

## 112
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)**

## 17.78%
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**

## 4.44%
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**

## 13.33%

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** | 52% | 61% | Below |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 56% | 62% | Close to average |

| Year | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 61% | S |
| **2022/23 (final)** | 50% | 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** | 78% | 74% | Close to average |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 78% | 75% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 74% | S |
| **2022/23 (final)** | 70% | 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** | 65% | 72% | Below |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 67% | 72% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 72% | S |
| **2022/23 (final)** | 60% | 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** | 61% | 73% | Below |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 67% | 74% | Below |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 73% | S |
| **2022/23 (final)** | 50% | 73% | 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

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** | 33% | 46% | Below |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | S | 47% | S |
| **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** | 83% | 62% | Above |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 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** | 67% | 59% | Above |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 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** | 33% | 60% | Below |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 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** | 33% | 68% | -34 pp |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 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** | 83% | 80% | 4 pp |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | S | 81% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 80% | S |

| Year | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|---|---|---|---|
| **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** | 67% | 78% | -11 pp |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | 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** | 33% | 80% | -46 pp |
| **2024/25 (revised)** | S | 81% | S |
| **2023/24 (final)** | S | 79% | S |
| **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 (2 term)** | 5.2% | 5.2% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 6.5% | 5.5% | Above |
| **2022/23 (3 term)** | 6.5% | 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)** | 14.3% | 13.3% | Close to average |
| **2023/24 (3 term)** | 18.0% | 14.6% | Close to average |
| **2022/23 (3 term)** | 14.8% | 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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