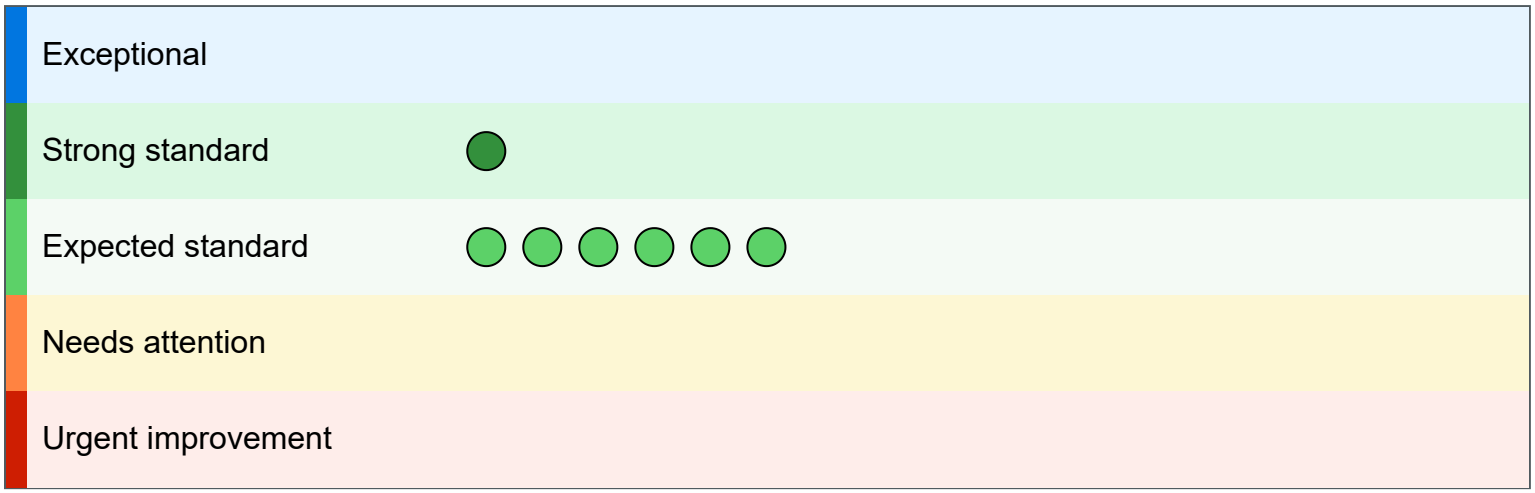
St Margaret's Primary Academy

Address: Church Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4JF

Unique reference number (URN): 141984

Inspection report: 21 April 2026



Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school's wide-ranging personal development programme is carefully planned and well led. The school teaches pupils about fundamental British values, such as tolerance and democracy. Staff ensure that pupils understand the importance of responsibility, putting things right when something goes wrong, pupil voice, rights and respect.

The school's offer is designed to meet all pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to take part in activities. Where needed, leaders and staff take thoughtful action to reduce obstacles to pupils' success. A high number of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, looked-after children and young carers all benefit from the school's offer.

Pupils take part in popular clubs, such as choir, coding and cross-country. Other activities, such as eco-club and taking part in community projects, boost pupils' wellbeing and raise their environmental awareness. Leaders ensure that pupils are inspired and challenged by the school's '11 before 11' programme. This provides opportunities such as watching birds, camping and taking part in a theatrical performance.

Leaders ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of relationships, health and safety education. Lessons on such topics are reinforced through assemblies, stories and regular safeguarding themes. As a result, pupils know how to manage risks to themselves in the community. They understand how to stay safe both online and offline.

The school's pastoral offer is extensive and well targeted. This includes nurture spaces, play therapy and family support. Leaders recognise the significant social and emotional challenges that pupils may face. Pupils discuss their emotions confidently. They can identify trusted adults both in and outside of school. Daily checks on pupils' wellbeing ensure that leaders and the pastoral team can respond promptly to needs.

Throughout pupils' time at the school, leaders and staff promote high aspirations. College and university visits, alongside meetings with professionals, inspire pupils to see their future potential. Pupils' transition to secondary school is well planned.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils' achievement shows an improving picture over time. Outcomes dipped last year due to staffing instability and inconsistencies in teaching. There was also a high level of need among pupils. Current evidence shows that most pupils progress well through the school's curriculum. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils nationally is closing, and their attainment is increasingly in line with their peers and close to average.

Generally, pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their starting points.

Mostly, pupils develop a secure understanding of the basics of reading, writing and mathematics. This work begins successfully in the early years, which helps pupils to broaden their learning of different subjects in key stage 1.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have thoughtfully revised their approach to attendance. They ensure that expectations are clear and consistently applied. Staff work closely with leaders to monitor attendance daily. They follow up absences promptly and make contact with families. Leaders are persistent in checking the reasons for pupils' absences. The school provides practical support where pupils, parents and carers face barriers to regular attendance. Leaders emphasise the importance of attendance and support the establishment of clear, helpful daily routines for pupils. This approach has a positive impact. Attendance is improving for many pupils, including those previously identified as persistently absent.

The school provides a calm, supportive and orderly environment. Staff understand and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well. Pupils are typically polite, welcoming and respectful. Clear, well-established routines help pupils to make a positive start at school each day. Most pupils understand the school's expectations of their behaviour. For example, they listen attentively to adults. This helps create an environment free from discrimination. Pupils' positive behaviour generally supports their learning. Leaders and staff support pupils who need extra support to maintain their self-discipline effectively. The school does not tolerate bullying, including discriminatory behaviour. Pupils know who to speak to if they have concerns about these issues. Leaders address bullying quickly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum, which they have adapted to reflect the context of the school. Curriculum content is logically ordered to build pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Staff help pupils to use important subject vocabulary with confidence. Pupils talk positively about their learning in a range of subjects.

Leaders ensure that staff make a strong focus on establishing secure foundations, particularly in the early years and in phonics. The quality of phonics teaching is consistently positive and supported by regular training for staff. The school ensures that staff help pupils to read books that closely match their ability.

Teachers identify pupils' progress and next steps in English and mathematics effectively. Staff are aware of which pupils need additional support, such as with reading, spelling and handwriting. They take effective action to help pupils to catch up. Pupils talk about how well staff support their learning of these subjects. Staff help pupils to know how they can improve their work. Sometimes, in subjects beyond English and mathematics, staff do not check pupils' understanding in lessons as well as they could. Some teaching does not revisit pupils' prior learning effectively enough.

Leaders invest in helpful professional learning for staff. The school also benefits from opportunities to check the accuracy of its work with other schools in the trust. These links support consistency and shared expectations.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders make thoughtful decisions about the curriculum and provision in the early years. The curriculum considers carefully the knowledge that staff will teach and when they will do so, as well as which deliberate opportunities will revisit important knowledge with children. Teachers adapt teaching of the curriculum well to meet the needs of children, such as for children who find learning more difficult.

Staff support children's wellbeing and welfare by building warm relationships, setting clear routines and maintaining high expectations. Staff support all children, including those new to the school or with additional needs, to settle and take part. Children are confident to follow the daily routines. They understand expectations, such as listening and taking turns. They settle quickly at the start of the day.

Mostly, teaching is knowledgeable and successful. Generally, children make progress from their starting points and are well prepared for learning in Year 1. The teaching of phonics is well established and builds children's ability to read with fluency. Staff develop pupils' basic skills in counting, speaking listening and their knowledge of number and size. Teaching includes a focus on helping children to learn important words, but, sometimes, staff do not make the most of opportunities to help children to do so.

Inclusion

Expected standard

The school is welcoming and inclusive. Leaders strive to ensure that all the school's diverse community feel that they belong here. Leaders implement clear ways for staff to work so that they spot barriers to learning early and provide pupils with effective support.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and other pupils who may face different difficulties in their lives benefit from the work of the school. Teachers make sure that plans for individual pupils are well thought through. This support that staff provide includes pencil grips, visual timetables, some carefully chosen arrangements of seating in classrooms and/or extra help during lessons. Those staff who work specifically with individual pupils provide them with effective support.

The school's skilled pastoral team supports pupils' social and emotional wellbeing, where needed. Pupils' readiness to learn is a high priority for all staff. The school celebrates the strengths and individual progress of pupils. This helps pupils to feel respected and then to engage well in the school's provision. Nonetheless, some of the school's work to adapt support for pupils to build their independence is less successful than it could be.

Parents and carers speak very positively about the school's work on inclusion. For instance, they value the open communication with them about their child's progress. The school welcomes parental involvement in planning support for their children. The school is fully committed to supporting all pupils' learning, wellbeing and wider development. Leaders are

determined to further strengthen the school’s work. They have started to review how effectively the school supports pupils with the greatest needs.

Leadership and governance **Expected standard**

Leaders provide clear and purposeful leadership. They understand the school’s strengths and what needs to improve. Leaders, including trustees, make sure that there is a shared vision, which focuses on high expectations, improving consistency and acting in the best interests of pupils. Leaders carefully prioritise their actions, focusing particularly on the curriculum and teaching, behaviour and attendance. Leaders and staff recognise that recent improvements reflect clearer ways of working and the stronger consistency of approach that has been established. The trust provides appropriate oversight, challenge and support to the school. Trustees meet their statutory duties.

The school gives staff wellbeing high importance. Teachers feel well supported by leaders. They appreciate the practical steps taken by the school to reduce their workload. This includes protected time to lead different subjects and steps to use technology effectively. Professional learning is well planned and focused. Through working with other schools, leaders and staff share effective practice and access useful advice. Recent training has supported staff to adapt their teaching of subject curriculums to meet the needs of different pupils. Staff describe a strong team ethos, with a shared commitment to pupils and families. Staff and pupils appreciate the changes that leaders make to the school's work. They recognise and value the improvements throughout the school. School leaders and the trust's local governing body ensure that parents and carers have a voice in the work of the school. Leaders have started to increase the opportunities for parental involvement at the school.

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

This is a welcoming school. Pupils are happy and enjoy learning. Staff know pupils well and build trusting relationships with them and their parents and carers. These relationships help pupils to overcome barriers to learning and support their wellbeing. Feeling supported and understood enables pupils to settle with ease into school life. Pupils behave sensibly and know that any instances of bullying will be taken seriously and resolved by leaders and staff.

Pupils achieve well across the school. In the early years, children settle quickly and feel safe in the setting. They understand the school's routines and expectations and respond positively to them. By learning to take turns and share resources, children explore their environment confidently. Pupils enjoy a broad, ambitious curriculum and speak positively about their learning. They take pride in their work, often using new vocabulary to talk about what they learn. They can explain how their work has improved over time. Staff adapt the curriculum to meet a wide range of pupils' needs. These adaptations help most pupils to learn and to understand the world beyond their community. Pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are fully included in day-to-day school life. They build positive relationships with peers and adults. Staff listen carefully to pupils and value what they say. This helps them feel respected.

Beyond lessons, pupils take part in a wide range of activities. These include clubs, school responsibilities and opportunities to contribute to the wider community. These experiences help pupils to develop confidence, resilience and their wider interests. They understand the school values of safety, being ready to learn, teamwork, high expectations and integrity. Pupils use these values to reflect on their progress. Staff encourage pupils to develop high aspirations for their futures.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding across the curriculum and address misconceptions quickly.
- Leaders should ensure consistency in the adaptations provided across the curriculum to ensure that all pupils succeed.
- Leaders should continue to work with parents and carers to encourage them to take up the support available.

About this inspection

The school is part of the Reach2 Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Cathie Paine, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gavin Robert.

Inspectors carried out this 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 school leaders, trust representatives, members of the local governing body, pupils, parents and carers and staff.

The school currently makes use of 4 alternative provisions.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. There is a new headteacher and leadership team.

Headteacher: Julie Catchpole

Lead inspector:
Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Heather Hann, Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Pedlow, 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

389
Above 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

420
Above 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)

51.53%
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

2.31%
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

17.99%
Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above 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	61%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	51%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	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 (revised)	56%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	77%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	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	72%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	70%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	72%	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	57%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	43%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	58%	44%	Above

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	68%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	45%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	76%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	79%	60%	Above

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	68%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	68%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	69%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	59%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	64%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	68%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	68%	67%	0 pp
2022/23 (final)	58%	66%	-9 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	68%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (revised)	45%	81%	-36 pp
2023/24 (final)	76%	80%	-4 pp
2022/23 (final)	79%	78%	0 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	68%	78%	-9 pp
2024/25 (revised)	68%	78%	-10 pp
2023/24 (final)	68%	78%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	77%	-8 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	69%	80%	-11 pp
2024/25 (revised)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	81%	79%	2 pp
2022/23 (final)	64%	79%	-16 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 (2 term)	6.6%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.5%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	7.2%	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 (2 term)	19.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	23.0%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.9%	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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