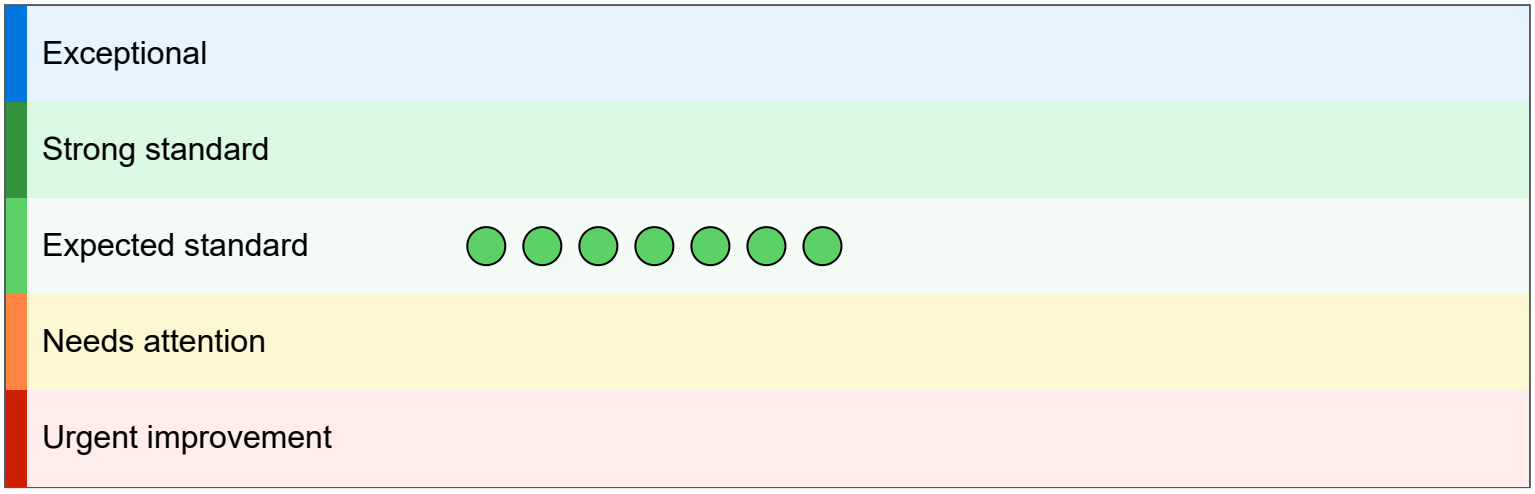
Lawford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address: The Avenue, Lawford, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 2FR

Unique reference number (URN): 115297

Inspection report: 16 June 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

Overall, pupils achieve well. This is reflected in national tests, where pupils achieve in line with, and in some places above, national averages over time. It is also shown in the quality of work pupils produce and in their knowledge across subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 can explain how to debug code when it goes wrong during computing lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also achieve well. They make appropriate progress from their starting points. This supports pupils with SEND to achieve targets as set out in their education, health and care plans where appropriate.

Typically, pupils secure their understanding of the important knowledge they need to become confident readers, writers and mathematicians. For example, pupils secure their understanding of number. This helps them to quickly calculate mathematical problems. Pupils generally secure the important knowledge needed to be proficient writers. While they do this well overall, sometimes, staff do not support pupils to apply their understanding of handwriting, grammar, punctuation or spelling as consistently as they might.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have established a clear approach to identify when a pupil's attendance becomes a concern. Should this happen, leaders take appropriate action. This helps to improve the attendance of those pupils who need to improve their attendance. Consequently, overall absence and persistent absence are low over time. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils behave well across the school. They cooperate with each other. Pupils enjoy playing together during lunchtime on the playground. They also enjoy sitting together to eat lunch and chat about their day in the dining hall. Lessons are typically free from disruption. Pupils understand the expectations staff have of them. They concentrate on their work. Pupils want to work hard because they know it is important to do so. They want to achieve and be fully prepared for secondary school.

Pupils are positive about the way they take care of each other. They appreciate the way their peers are kind and look after them. Bullying is rare. Should it happen, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. This helps to ensure that it does not happen again. Leaders ensure that they have oversight of behaviour incidents that happen. This helps them to put in place effective support to help pupils improve their behaviour should they need to.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders understand where the curriculum is working well and where to target improvements. They have clearly sequenced the curriculum so that pupils develop their knowledge and understanding in a coherent way. The curriculum is typically taught well. In general, staff have appropriate subject knowledge. Overall, staff provide work for pupils that is appropriately matched to pupils' prior knowledge. They also provide effective support to match pupils' different starting points. This helps pupils to secure and, in some places,

deepen their understanding. However, sometimes, staff do not do this as consistently. When this happens, pupils do not secure, or deepen, their knowledge as well as they might.

Leaders prioritise supporting pupils to secure the important building blocks of knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics they need for future learning. Typically, staff do this effectively. Pupils at the early stages of reading are well supported to become confident, fluent readers. Leaders have reviewed their approaches to teaching pupils how to become better writers. While staff support pupils to close gaps in their writing knowledge, there is some work to do to ensure that this is done more consistently. At times, teaching does not consistently support pupils to apply their understanding of handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling when they come to write in different subjects.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise children getting off to a good start in the early years. They ensure that staff use clear processes to quickly get to know children and their families. This helps staff to build purposeful relationships with parents and carers. It also helps them to understand children's different starting points.

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and clearly sequenced curriculum to enable children to achieve well across all areas of learning. Staff are knowledgeable in how to teach this curriculum. They match the activities they ask children to complete carefully to what they want children to learn. This helps children to secure the knowledge they need. For example, children have ample opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical knowledge throughout the day.

Staff interact well with children. They are well aware of those who may need some extra help. They are particularly aware of those children who need support with their wellbeing. Staff often engage children in meaningful discussions. They help to narrate children's play and probe their understanding with thoughtful questions. This helps children to expand their vocabulary. Staff are also knowledgeable in how to teach children to read. Children quickly become adept at blending sounds together to read new words. This helps to prepare children well for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders identify the needs of pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing accurately. This includes the barriers disadvantaged pupils face. Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to help reduce these barriers. Staff understand the role they play in supporting disadvantaged pupils. They do this effectively.

Leaders provide purposeful training to staff. This means staff, typically, use consistent strategies to support pupils who need extra help. For example, focused support helps pupils to learn to manage their feelings and emotions. Leaders seek advice from other professionals when they need to. This helps leaders to put in place effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes for pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders work effectively with the local authority and providers of alternative provision to ensure that this work has a positive impact.

Leaders have refined the way they check on the impact of the support they give to pupils with SEND. They increasingly use information to understand where staff can adjust their strategies and approaches. Leaders understand the importance of ensuring that they embed these new systems still further so they can better evaluate the information they gather. This is so staff can more skilfully adjust and improve the support they offer to pupils with SEND.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where to improve further the quality of education. Governors keep a close eye on the school. They hold leaders to account for their actions. This helps them to understand where leaders are having the most success with school improvement priorities. It also helps them to provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders. School leaders and governors have introduced new ways to quality assure different aspects of the school. These provide them with useful information on the impact of their work. It also helps them to make changes where needed. For example, recent changes to some curriculum subjects have impacted positively on pupils' learning. In some areas, these systems to check on the school are less embedded than in others. This makes it harder for leaders to skilfully adapt and adjust their strategies with precision.

Leaders build effective relationships with staff, other professionals and with parents and carers. Leaders provide targeted and useful training. This helps staff to improve their practice. This in turn supports staff to manage their own workload and wellbeing. Leaders have carefully managed the growth of the school over time. This has helped them to maintain the close-knit community feel the school is proud of. Parents and carers are positive about the way the school supports their child. They appreciate the way the school ensures that their child is ready for their next stage of learning.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils secure their understanding of the PSHE curriculum. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and when in the community. This is enhanced through the trips pupils go on, such as to the Royal National Lifeboat Institute to learn about water safety. Pupils are clear on the importance of building and maintaining healthy relationships. The PSHE curriculum is well supplemented by the wider personal development offer. This helps pupils to understand the important values they need to hold for life after school. Pupils show respect towards those who are different to them. They value learning about, and celebrating, these differences.

Leaders place a high priority on supporting pupils' pastoral and wellbeing needs. Pupils looking forward to being with their Lawford families. They enjoy spending time with staff and pupils from across the school during these sessions. This helps pupils to feel like they belong as part of their school. Staff are tuned in to how to check in on a pupil who may need it. Should a pupil need more targeted support, they get this. Kind, caring and knowledgeable staff provide the help pupils need, when they need it. This helps pupils to develop both their confidence and their resilience.

The enrichment offer is broad and exciting for pupils. They value the opportunities leaders provide for them to develop their talents and interests. Clubs are varied and cater appropriately for the different interests pupils hold. Disadvantaged pupils benefit fully from this wider offer. This is because leaders ensure that they track their participation. Across the school, pupils love to hone their skills at fencing, squash, gardening, Latin, arts and crafts and more. This helps to ignite aspirations for pupils' life after school.

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

Pupils are proud to be a part of the Lawford family. Should a pupil face a barrier towards their learning or wellbeing, leaders identify these barriers and put in place effective support to remove them. This includes barriers pupils may face towards attending school. As a result, most pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils like to learn. This includes the youngest children in the Reception Year. Children are keen to explore the purposeful activities staff carefully plan for them. Pupils of all ages are eager to develop their knowledge of technology. Younger children love to use devices to scan QR codes and upload the work they are proud of for staff to see. Older pupils are keen to develop their understanding of how to code during computing lessons.

Overall, staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. This motivates pupils to typically work hard in class. Pupils frequently want to achieve well, as they know why this is important for their futures. Pupils are kind to each other. They look after each other. Pupils show appreciation for the differences they each have. They show fairness when playing games together during lunchtimes. This helps pupils to feel part of their 'Lawford Families'. They like coming together in these groups throughout their time in school. This helps to build the close community feel that exists across the school.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities for enrichment that leaders carefully plan for them. They love to develop their responsibility as digital leaders, buddies or eco-councillors. Trips to museums or to go crabbing at the seaside by train give pupils memorable moments. Pupils wear their school badge with pride when representing the school, such as when part of the successful girls’ football team.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the work teachers set pupils, and the support they provide, is more precisely matched to pupils’ prior knowledge and starting points.
- Leaders should ensure that teaching across subjects consistently supports pupils to improve their handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, should ensure that they use their monitoring and oversight to identify where to adjust their strategies and priorities for future school improvement.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors is Karen Livingston.

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, other school leaders and staff, a group of governors, a representative of the virtual school, a representative from a provider of alternative provision and pupils.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has grown significantly since the previous inspection. The school now has 2 classes in each year group from Reception Year to Year 4.

This school is registered as having a Christian (Church of England) religious character. The last section 48 inspection was in February 2026.

The school currently uses one provider of alternative provision. This is an enhanced provision located within a registered primary school. This provision does not make up part of the host school's registration on Get Information about Schools.

Headteacher: Abigail Fairbairn

Lead inspector:
Michael Williams, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Sonia Innes, Ofsted Inspector
Ceri Jones, 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 16 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

306
Close to 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

360
Close to 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)

6.86%
Well 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

2.61%
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

13.07%
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

Well 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	67%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	59%	61%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national 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	85%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	88%	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	74%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	72%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	76%	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	87%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	91%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	84%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	Above

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	29%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	57%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	29%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

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

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	29%	68%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	29%	78%	-49 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25 (final)	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 (3 term)	3.7%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.1%	5.9%	Below

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)	5.8%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.1%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	8.1%	16.2%	Below

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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