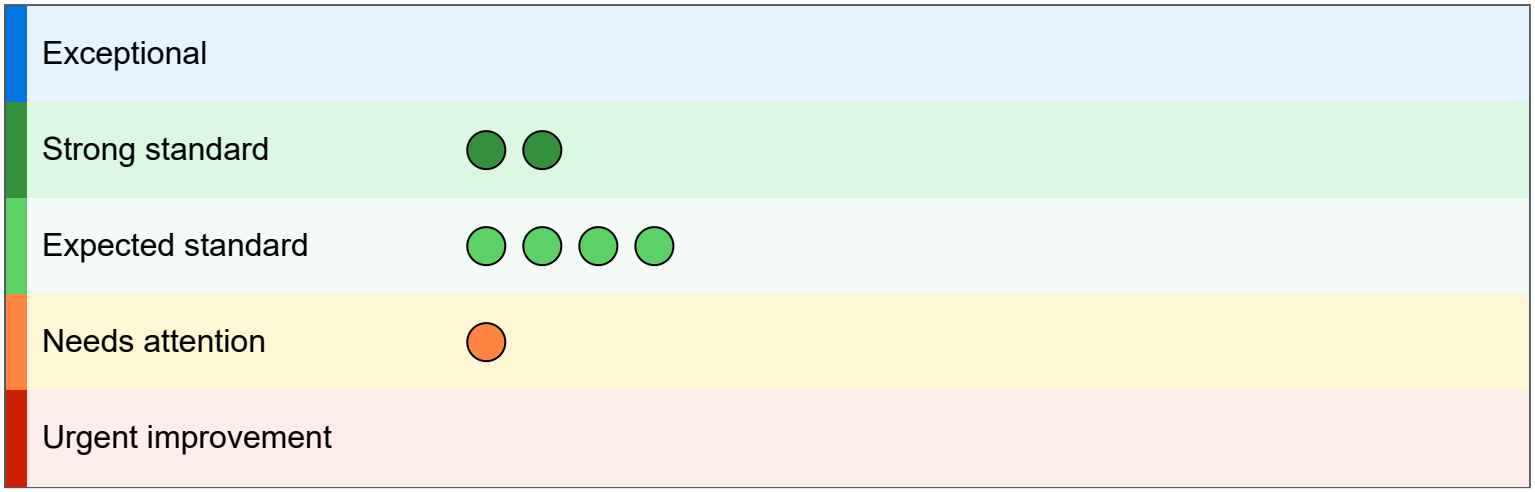
St Leonard's Church of England Primary School

Address: Overthorpe Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 4SB

Unique reference number (URN): 123179

Inspection report: 28 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

Inclusion

Strong standard

This is an inclusive school with a culture of high expectations. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They strive to reduce barriers to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, can succeed.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND and wider vulnerabilities systematically and swiftly. They work closely with parents and carers and external agencies to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs. Leaders use this information to supplement the curriculum with sharply focused support and interventions. Staff are well trained and deliver these effectively. This means that pupils can access learning and make progress from their starting points.

The school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND provides a high standard of care and education. Leaders use education, health and care plans to develop a programme of learning that is precisely aligned to pupils' individual needs. Consequently, pupils thrive.

Leaders monitor the impact of their strategy for spending additional funding rigorously, with a sharp focus on progress and participation. This helps them to plan for and allocate funding precisely to reduce barriers and increase access for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, all pupils can access the full range of opportunities on offer.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have designed a programme for personal development that is comprehensive and closely aligned to statutory requirements and the school's context. Pupils develop secure and detailed understanding across all aspects.

The personal development and wellbeing programme is an entitlement for all pupils. Leaders adapt the content to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For some pupils, it is a personalised programme.

Pupils learn how to keep safe, stay healthy and build positive relationships with others. Older pupils receive targeted teaching that focuses on transition to secondary school. This programme of learning, developed in collaboration with external safeguarding partners, prepares pupils for life in their local community. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life beyond primary school. They are confident, resilient and behave well, consistently.

Pupils learn to be inclusive and embrace diversity. Everyone is welcome at St Leonard's. Fundamental British values are integrated across the curriculum. For example, pupils learn the importance of democracy when voting for the many leadership responsibilities on offer. Pupils' knowledge of other British values is reflected in their behaviours and attitudes, for example mutual respect and tolerance.

Opportunities for spirituality and reflection are invitational and inclusive. Pupils embrace the opportunity to sit peacefully and reflect. The youngest children watch intently as glitter settles in a muddy jar.

Leaders ensure that all pupils have access to enrichment opportunities that broaden their horizons. For example, pupils can participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as gardening club, coding, and choir. Leaders widen pupils' experiences by planning visits that are aspirational and inspiring. For example, pupils recall enthusiastically a visit to watch musical theatre in London.

Pastoral support is carefully considered. Leaders are vigilant to those who may require help and put appropriate strategies in place swiftly.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils typically attend well and arrive on time. This is reflected in attendance that is broadly in line with national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders analyse attendance data carefully and take swift action to address any barriers. Persistent absence remains a concern for some pupils. Leaders are taking appropriate action to address this.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They are respectful and polite to staff and their peers. This is because leaders and staff have established a culture of mutual respect. Expectations for behaviour for learning are clearly communicated and well understood by pupils. As a result, pupils settle quickly and demonstrate high levels of engagement. Staff proactively support pupils with their behaviour. They respond swiftly to pupils' needs, including those with SEND. This means that pupils receive the support they need before behaviour becomes a cause for concern. Pupils say that bullying does not happen at St Leonard's. They trust staff will help them with any problems they have. Consequently, pupils feel safe and secure. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Although uncommon, any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have designed the curriculum to meet statutory requirements and pupils' needs. The curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriately sequenced. This means that pupils are taught the knowledge they need in small steps over time.

The curriculum is generally taught well. Staff present information clearly and use knowledge of pupils' starting points to match learning to their needs. Pupils' interests are considered and classroom teaching is supplemented by a range of enrichment opportunities. For example, educational visits to places like Bletchley Park help pupils to develop a deeper understanding of their learning.

Leaders focus on teaching pupils the core knowledge and skills that they need. This includes spelling, handwriting and mathematics. Leaders have prioritised the professional learning of all staff to improve phonics teaching. As result, this is improving and children are learning to read more effectively.

Teachers typically use their checks on learning effectively to identify misconceptions and gaps in knowledge. This means that teachers are mostly aware of pupils who have not yet secured core skills. They use this information to put in place purposeful adaptations to learning. This ensures that most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the support they need to make progress in their learning.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise the early years because they know that giving children the best start to their education is crucial for future success. As a result, leaders have developed a carefully sequenced curriculum across Nursery and Reception.

Leaders focus on core skills. Children in Nursery ‘squiggle while they wiggle’ to develop gross and fine motor skills, while those in Reception learn a carefully sequenced handwriting programme. Leaders have taken deliberate action to improve the teaching of phonics. This means that children are making more consistent progress in their reading. Some gaps remain, however, particularly among disadvantaged children.

Staff in the early years take every opportunity to engage children in positive and purposeful learning opportunities. There is a sharp focus on developing children’s communication skills. Staff model language with precision. They have targeted interactions with children and monitor their impact. As a result, staff know exactly what children need next to make progress.

Children are happy and safe in the calm and inclusive environment. Routines are embedded. Children learn to manage their feelings, make choices and build independence. Staff know children well and adapt the provision carefully to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means that, typically, children progress well and are ready for Year 1 by the end of Reception.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders are ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. They have a sharp understanding of the school’s context, strengths and areas for development. Leaders make the right decisions at the right time. However, continued work is required to secure rapid improvement in some areas, for example attendance.

Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school. They use this to provide support and challenge. They hold leaders to account appropriately. There are robust systems in place to monitor the work of the school. Governors assure themselves that safeguarding is effective and that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met.

Leaders are proactive in engaging with parents and carers through regular communication. Consequently, parents speak positively of the school. Leaders are outward looking. They draw upon external professionals for support and challenge. Leaders seek to build relationships with the wider community. For example, they work with external organisations to support and fund enrichment opportunities, such as singing, theatre projects and a bicycle library.

The professional learning programme is well considered and closely aligned with school priorities. Many staff complete further study, including national professional qualifications. Training to support disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is prioritised. This means staff are well equipped to meet pupils' needs quickly and effectively.

There is a culture of care in the school. Workload and wellbeing are thoughtfully considered. Leaders take meaningful steps to support staff. Consequently, staff are motivated, committed to their roles and effusive in their praise of leaders.

Needs attention

Achievement **Needs attention**

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Published outcomes in national tests are not in line with national standards. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Pupils make progress from their starting points. For some, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), this is rapid. However, this is not consistent across subjects and year groups.

Core skills in reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised, although some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, have gaps in their learning. In reading, leaders' improvements to the curriculum and teaching are not embedded fully. This means that for some pupils gaps remain.

Across the curriculum, achievement is variable. In some subjects, pupils achieve well and confidently demonstrate their learning. In others, pupils' key knowledge is less secure. This means that some pupils are not as well prepared as they could be for the next stage of their education.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this highly inclusive school, where everyone matters. Pupils generally attend school regularly and arrive with a positive attitude, ready to learn. Leaders know, however, there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils attend as regularly as they should.

Pupils are warmly welcomed by caring staff who know them and their needs well. Consequently, pupils feel they belong. Pupils behave well, consistently. This is because staff

model and reinforce high expectations for behaviour. Pupils say that bullying does not happen at St Leonard's but they know staff will help them if there is a problem. This means that pupils feel safe.

In lessons, pupils settle quickly and show dedication to their learning. Staff generally present information clearly. They make precise adaptations to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can actively participate in lessons and make progress from their starting points.

Pupils' core skills are prioritised. Leaders have taken action to develop the curriculum and improve teaching, particularly in reading. This means that pupils now learn to read more effectively and gaps in learning across the curriculum are beginning to close. While some pupils make rapid progress from their starting points, overall achievement is not as high as it should be, however.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive personal development and wellbeing programme that is carefully tailored to pupils' needs, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEND. Pupils learn how to stay safe, keep healthy and become responsible citizens who respect others. They embrace opportunities to develop their talents and interests through a broad range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities. These help pupils become confident, independent and well prepared for life beyond school.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that pupils learn to read well thanks to sufficiently embedded and skilful phonics teaching across the school.
- Leaders should ensure that consistently high-quality teaching supports pupils to apply key knowledge and skills effectively across the curriculum, driving up standards of achievement.
- Leaders should continue to implement their clear and strategic plans to secure ongoing and rapid improvement across the school's work, particularly in relation to attendance and achievement.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Natalie Robb.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team during the inspection. They also spoke with members of staff with particular responsibilities, such as those who lead on inclusion and attendance.

The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority and the diocese.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Oxford. The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in February 2020.

The school includes a specially resourced provision for 11 pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2023.

Headteacher: Caroline Debus

Lead inspector:
Anneka Fisher, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Kimberley Kemp, Ofsted Inspector
Ian Elkington, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

350
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

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)

27.10%
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

4.57%
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

14.29%
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

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)

SEN unit

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

PMLD - Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	51%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	44%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	51%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	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	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	60%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	66%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	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	67%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	51%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	39%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	41%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	28%	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	48%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
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	50%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33%	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	55%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	44%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	39%	68%	-29 pp
2024/25 (final)	41%	69%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	67%	-12 pp
2022/23 (final)	28%	66%	-39 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	48%	80%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-24 pp
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	50%	78%	-28 pp
2024/25 (final)	59%	78%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	33%	77%	-44 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	55%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	53%	81%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	78%	79%	-2 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	79%	-35 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.3%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	17.5%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	19.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.9%	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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