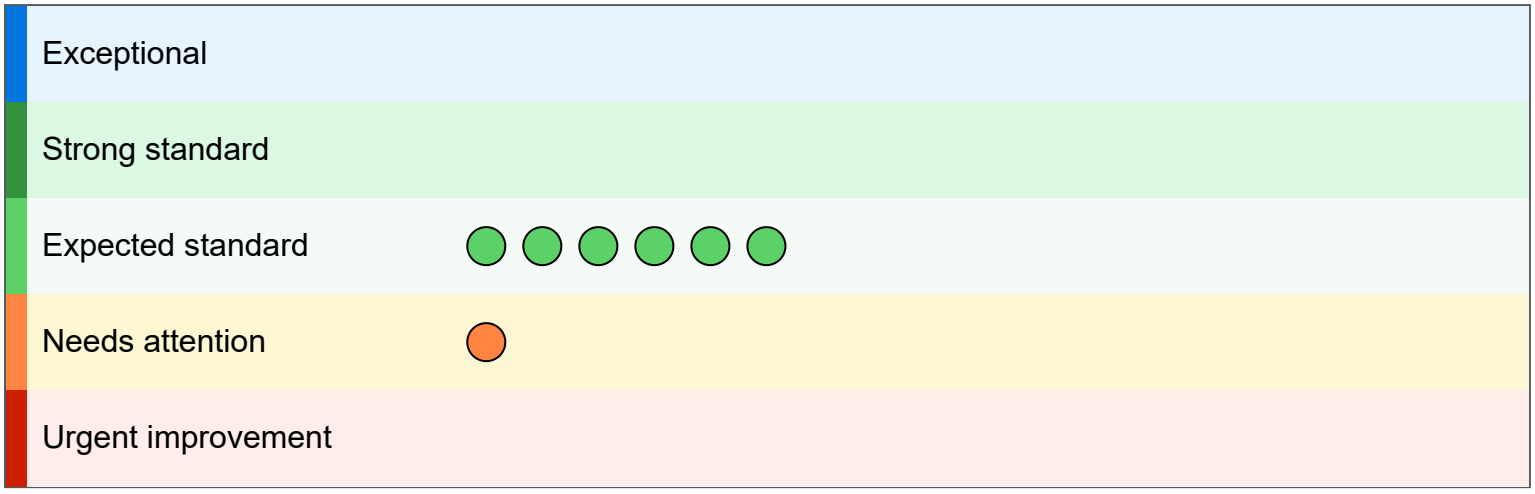
Rolph Church of England Primary School and Nursery

Address: High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO16 0DY

Unique reference number (URN): 140506

Inspection report: 9 September 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

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have established clear expectations for behaviour through the ‘3 Bs’ of 'Be kind, Be safe and Be responsible’. These expectations are supported by a behaviour ladder. This is clearly understood by pupils and staff. Staff apply expectations consistently, contributing to improved behaviour across the school. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons. Improved playtime provision encourages purposeful play and strengthens relationships. Pupils understand what bullying is, know how to report concerns and trust adults to respond effectively. They also know how to stay safe online and in the local community. Staff address poor behaviour consistently. They adapt approaches when needed for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who face barriers.

Leaders have strengthened their focus on attendance. They analyse attendance patterns carefully, identify barriers and monitor pupils at risk of persistent absence. Attendance declined last year, after remaining close to national figures over the previous 3 years. Leaders responded by refining procedures and strengthening collaboration with the attendance hub and partner schools. They provide tailored support, including home visits where needed. They follow up on absence robustly and in line with published guidance. Leaders take appropriate action to reduce absence and improve attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching. Current achievement outcomes reflect previous instability in staffing and leadership. As a result, there remains some difference between the quality of education now in place and published outcomes. Staff are addressing gaps in pupils’ knowledge successfully.

Leaders provide clear strategic direction through curriculum refinement and the implementation of the ‘Rolph Way’. This establishes a clear approach to teaching across the school. Leaders have adapted the curriculum in response to assessment information and pupils' achievement. They place a strong focus on pupils securing important knowledge in English and mathematics. Leaders have introduced targeted approaches, including daily arithmetic and handwriting sessions, to strengthen learning.

Typically, teachers implement the curriculum well. Pupils understand lesson expectations and key learning. Teachers use assessment effectively to identify misconceptions, adapt teaching and provide additional support where needed. Professional development and feedback from leaders have strengthened staff expertise and improved teaching. However, some variation remains in how consistently the refreshed curriculum is implemented and in the decisions teachers make about what is taught and when.

Leaders promote an inclusive curriculum through carefully planned adaptations and interventions. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum are helping pupils make better progress. Leaders recognise that securing greater consistency in curriculum implementation

and strengthening the culture of professional learning will support further improvements in pupils' outcomes.

Early years

Expected standard

Children get off to a positive, settled start in the early years. Leaders have a clear understanding of children's needs and development. They plan assessment and transition arrangements carefully. Staff in Year 1 receive detailed information about children's starting points, achievements and next steps. Strong partnerships with parents and carers and external agencies help staff identify additional needs quickly. Staff secure appropriate support promptly.

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on communication and language. Children develop confidence in speaking, listening and interacting with others. Staff design activities that reinforce key concepts across different areas of learning. For example, board games develop early mathematical understanding while promoting cooperation and turn-taking. Leaders prioritise foundational knowledge, particularly in early reading. They recognise the need for greater consistency in aspects of early writing and mathematics so that learning builds securely over time.

Teachers match learning closely to children's needs. Staff model language effectively, support communication skills and maintain children's engagement. They assess learning continuously, identify needs quickly and adapt provision appropriately.

Children engage positively with learning. They make progress from their starting points. Staff prioritise welfare and wellbeing. They provide effective support for children with medical, developmental or personal care needs. Nurturing relationships, clear expectations and tailored support help all children access the curriculum successfully. As a result, children stay safe and learn well.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have strengthened the school's approach to identifying, assessing and meeting pupils' needs. Leaders help staff adapt learning through clear expectations and detailed information about pupils' strengths, needs and circumstances. They track pupils' progress and review the impact of support. Leaders use this information to adapt provision where needed. Consequently, support reduces barriers to learning and helps pupils achieve success.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. They secure additional support promptly, including early years funding and external assessment of needs where appropriate. Staff support pupils with medical, developmental and learning needs effectively through tailored and agreed strategies. They work closely with external agencies and specialist services. Training has increased staff confidence and strengthened support for pupils with SEND.

Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Funding has increased learning support capacity, provided emotional wellbeing support and enabled

targeted interventions. Leaders review the impact of this provision and refine support where needed.

Pupils known, or previously known, to social care, along with other vulnerable pupils, receive support that helps address barriers to learning and wellbeing. The school uses one registered alternative provision. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance, welfare and progress carefully to ensure that support and funding meet pupils' needs effectively.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders have taken prompt action to address underperformance. Leaders and the trust understand the school's strengths and weaknesses clearly. They have identified the right priorities for improvement. Leaders have increased challenge, strengthened support and improved oversight. As a result, the school has greater stability and a clear direction. Leaders have implemented focused plans to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and improve the quality of education they receive.

Leaders have introduced a clear approach to learning, supported by training and regular feedback to staff. Staff understand leaders' expectations. Trust-wide collaboration and opportunities to share effective practice help to increase staff's expertise. Staff value this support and recognise its positive impact on pupils' experiences. Leaders have created a culture of shared commitment to improvement. Leaders consider staff wellbeing and workload carefully. Staff report that leaders are approachable, responsive and supportive.

Governance is effective. Trustees understand the school's context well. They provide appropriate support and challenge. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively and hold leaders to account for improvement.

Leaders work closely with parents, external professionals and the wider community. Most parents value the increased stability in staffing and leadership. They recognise the improvements that leaders have secured. Leaders also work successfully with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. They review pupil premium funding and support for pupils regularly. This helps ensure that resources improve pupils' experiences, wellbeing and outcomes.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders give pupils' personal development and wellbeing a high priority. They review the programme regularly to ensure that it meets pupils' needs, including those who face additional barriers and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that support their development, wellbeing and confidence.

Through personal, social, health and economic education, pupils learn about healthy relationships, personal wellbeing and online safety. They are well prepared for their move to secondary school. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and in everyday life. Teachers encourage pupils to consider different viewpoints, make responsible decisions and show respect for others. Pupils learn about different faiths, cultures and communities. This helps them understand the diverse society in which they live. They also understand the

importance of following rules and laws to keep themselves and others safe. These experiences help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have increased opportunities for pupils to develop their interests, skills and ambitions. A wide range of sporting activities, supported through links with the local community, encourages participation. Pupils also benefit from musical experiences, including opportunities to learn the flute in Year 6. Visits and residential experiences build confidence, develop resilience and raise aspirations. Pupils explain how these opportunities help them discover new interests and recognise what they can achieve.

The school includes all pupils in wider activities. Leaders ensure that everyone can take part. Recent investment in outdoor play equipment has increased opportunities for friendship, social interaction and wellbeing. Pupils value these improvements and speak positively about playtimes.

Pastoral support helps pupils feel safe, valued and included. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, including roles such as 'forest management leaders' and 'resilience representatives'. These roles develop confidence, responsibility and leadership skills. Leaders recognise that pupils could have more opportunities to share their views about school life.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Published outcomes in national tests and assessments show that pupils' attainment and progress have been inconsistent and, over time, are below national averages. Leaders recognise that achievement has not been as high as it should be. They have taken decisive action to improve the curriculum, teaching and assessment. However, published outcomes do not yet reflect the many recent improvements.

Achievement is improving from pupils' starting points. At the end of the early years, more children are securing the knowledge expected for their age. More pupils are secure in the phonics knowledge expected at the end of Year 1. Staff identify pupils who are not meeting expected standards, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide targeted support to help them make progress.

Older pupils, particularly in key stage 2, continue to have gaps in foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics because they have not consistently experienced the quality of curriculum and teaching now in place. Leaders have accurately identified these gaps and implemented focused interventions to address them. Where pupils have benefited from the revised curriculum and teaching approaches for longer, gaps in learning are less evident, and their knowledge is more secure.

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

Pupils are happy, safe and proud to be members of this caring school community. They wear their uniform with pride. They speak positively about the improvements they have seen. Older pupils recognise that expectations are now clearer and that the school is a calmer, more purposeful place in which to learn. Pupils understand and apply the school's '3 Bs', ‘Be Kind, Be Safe and Be Responsible’, which help to promote positive behaviour and respectful relationships. As a result, behaviour has improved. Pupils report that adults deal with concerns quickly and effectively. They understand what bullying is and are confident that staff will listen and take action when issues arise. The school's Christian values of love, integrity, fellowship and endurance underpin warm relationships between pupils and staff.

Pupils enjoy learning. They talk confidently about the subjects they study. Pupils understand what they are learning and how to improve their work. They recognise that learning becomes more challenging as they move through the school. They can explain the steps they need to take to be successful. Some older pupils have gaps in knowledge and skills due to weaknesses in past teaching. However, they are now making more consistent progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from targeted provision that helps reduce barriers to learning and/or wellbeing.

The school includes pupils in all aspects of school life. Pupils make suggestions that are acted upon. Positive relationships with peers and staff help pupils feel valued and supported. They participate in a range of wider opportunities, including clubs, sports, leadership roles, visits and residential experiences. These experiences broaden their horizons and raise aspirations. Visits to Cambridge colleges encourage ambition, while visits to places of worship help pupils understand and appreciate diversity. Pupils enjoy active playtimes and opportunities to build friendships. Most pupils attend regularly because they enjoy school and do not want to miss out on the rich experiences it provides.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils continue to secure the foundational knowledge and skills in English and mathematics needed to raise attainment across the school.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers implement the refreshed curriculum consistently well, making effective decisions about what is taught and when.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen the culture of professional learning to improve the effectiveness of teaching further.
- Leaders should continue to apply and refine their strategies to promote high attendance, reduce persistent absence and address barriers to attendance.

About this inspection

The school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Emma Wigmore, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Caroline Haynes.

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 executive headteacher, the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator, the staff, the CEO, the trust leaders and trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The executive headteacher, the head of school and the special educational needs coordinator have all taken up post since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The last section 48 inspection was in January 2023.

The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Nicola Emrich

Lead inspector:
Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Rowena Simmons, Ofsted Inspector
Hannah Stoten, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

231
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: 268

School capacity

244
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)

16.92%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.73%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.18%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	39%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	27%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	58%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	58%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	59%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	55%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	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	52%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	39%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

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

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	11%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	0%	47%	Below
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	33%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	63%	Below

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	39%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	59%	Below
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	28%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	22%	61%	Below
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	11%	68%	-57 pp
2024/25 (final)	0%	69%	-69 pp
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	33%	80%	-46 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	81%	-47 pp
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	39%	78%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp
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	28%	80%	-52 pp
2024/25 (final)	22%	81%	-58 pp
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)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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)	18.9%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	19.7%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	15.7%	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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