



St Stephen's Tockholes CofE Primary School

Address: Rock Lane, Tockholes, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 0LX

Unique reference number (URN): 119459

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

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 

Pupils attend well. Attendance for all groups of pupils is broadly in line with national averages. There are very few pupils who are persistently absent. If pupils face barriers to their attendance, leaders take effective action to reduce them. Attendance for individual pupils improves as a result.

Leaders have established well-understood routines and expectations that help pupils to be ready for their learning. Staff apply these routines and expectations consistently well. From the early years onwards, pupils rapidly develop positive attitudes to their learning. If pupils need additional help to manage their feelings and behaviour, they receive support and get back on track quickly. Across school, pupils behave well in and out of classrooms. Classrooms are calm and focused places where pupils attend to their learning. Bullying is very rare. Pupils and adults alike do not tolerate it. If it happens, leaders take highly effective action to address it. Leaders have created a culture in which all pupils are cared for and supported.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders routinely check the impact of the school's ambitious curriculum on pupils. They take well-considered action to make improvements when needed. Typically, the curriculum is well taught and supports pupils to be ready for the next stage of their learning. Staff check that pupils have remembered new learning. However, sometimes pupils are given tasks to complete that do not help them to secure the important learning that they need.

Leaders have prioritised improvements so that pupils secure the important foundations in learning. From the early years onwards, pupils quickly secure their knowledge of phonics. Across school, pupils are becoming increasingly fluent readers. In Reception and key stage 1, children acquire the important foundations in mathematics and writing. In the past, older pupils did not benefit from the same high-quality mathematics or writing curriculum that they now receive. They have a number of gaps in their learning which are closing rapidly.

Leaders have recently improved the teaching of handwriting. This is beginning to have an impact. Handwriting is improving; however, it remains inconsistent overall.

Staff routinely make adaptations to lessons to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff design these adaptations precisely around the important knowledge that pupils need to secure. Pupils with SEND make swift progress as a result.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders make sure that children secure the important foundations for future learning. Children quickly acquire the skills that they need to read, write and use numbers. Children regularly practise and apply these important skills. They are becoming fluent readers, writers and mathematicians. Adults use high-quality interactions with children to extend their vocabulary and communication skills. This prompts children to copy language and develop

confidence in speaking. Children regularly share books with adults. They enjoy exploring new stories and relish the language that they learn.

Children benefit from a carefully structured curriculum and purposeful activities that help them to swiftly acquire the important concepts that they need. Pupils find these activities interesting and focus very well on their learning.

Leaders and staff develop very positive relationships with parents and carers. They get to know families and children quickly. Leaders use these positive relationships to help secure the support and care that children need.

Leaders have created a calm, supportive environment where children feel cared for and confident to learn. Children quickly learn new routines and expectations. They behave consistently well and develop the positive attitudes to learning that they need for future success. Children typically achieve well and are ready for year 1 and beyond.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders get to know pupils and their families well. Staff swiftly and accurately identify pupils' needs. Leaders work closely with parents to make sure that pupils have the right support. As a result, pupils receive effective support that reduces barriers to their learning. In this small school, leaders check the impact of their work on each pupil carefully. Every pupil is valued.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive support that is typically tailored for them. Leaders make sure that they draw on external professionals and wider expertise to support pupils. Overall, pupils with SEND secure the important knowledge that they need. They are ready for their future learning.

Leaders use additional funding carefully and in the best interests of pupils. This has a positive impact on the experiences of pupils who face disadvantage. Leaders check that disadvantaged pupils receive the same range of experiences as others. Staff receive suitable training so that they can meet the needs of pupils in school. Staff use this training to ensure that every pupil is included.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Governors have an accurate view of the school. They use their expertise to support and challenge leaders effectively. The new leadership team has quickly got to grips with securing important improvements in school. Alongside governors, leaders ensure that the changes that they make rapidly benefit pupils.

Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties well. They help to guide and support leaders by making sure that resources are carefully used to support all pupils. Leaders and governors make sure that pupils facing disadvantage are a priority. The investment that leaders and governors make in supporting the wellbeing of pupils is often pivotal in helping pupils to be ready for the next stages of their learning.

Leaders make the maximum use of the expertise that exists across the 2 federated schools. All staff receive professional learning that leads to continued improvement. Staff value and

appreciate the support that leaders provide for their wellbeing. Staff are proud to work at this school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a carefully structured personal, social and health education curriculum that supports all pupils well. Pupils acquire the knowledge that they need to thrive in society. Pupils secure a deep understanding of fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance. Leaders plan experiences that help pupils to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs and embrace difference. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. They understand about healthy relationships and enjoy positive relationships with each other. Pupils know how to stay safe and how to keep physically and mentally healthy. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.

Pupils participate in a range of clubs that help them to develop their interests. For example, some participate in sports clubs while others learn to sew. Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who face disadvantage, are fully included in school life. They experience the same range of opportunities as their peers and are well supported. Pupils benefit from inspirational visitors, for example meeting with a successful athlete. Pupils also take part in a range of visits, including residential visits. These experiences help pupils to secure the resilience and independence that they need for their future lives.

Pupils are proud to be leaders in their school community. They have opportunities to represent their peers through work on the ethos council, the school council and the 'mini police'. Pupils take these roles seriously. Members of the eco council develop the outdoor environment with bird boxes and bug boxes. Ethos councillors lead worship in church. This helps pupils to become active citizens who contribute to society.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils have not secured the important foundations that they need in writing and mathematics well enough. Pupils' achievement in nationally published tests lags behind the current improvements that leaders have made.

Leaders have recently taken well-considered steps to improve achievement in writing and mathematics. Pupils' current achievement is improving. In the early years and key stage 1, pupils secure their knowledge in mathematics and writing. Older pupils did not receive the same high-quality curriculum that is in place now. They have gaps in their prior learning. These gaps are being addressed; however, they still limit pupils' achievement.

Pupils achieve well in many other aspects of the curriculum. Pupils who face disadvantage generally achieve as well as similar pupils nationally. Pupils achieve broadly in line with

national averages in phonics and in reading. Overall, pupils now secure the important foundations that they need to achieve well in the future.

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

Pupils benefit from a harmonious school culture. They feel deeply that they belong here. Leaders know individual pupils and their families well. If pupils need extra help with their wellbeing, they receive support that is just right for them. Pupils feel safe and are ready to learn. One parent summed up the views of many, saying, 'This school is a family.'

Pupils enjoy their learning. Leaders have recently implemented an ambitious curriculum for pupils to study. Pupils benefit from a high-quality reading and phonics curriculum that is taught well. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Leaders have recently improved the curriculum for writing and mathematics. Pupils' work is improving rapidly. However, pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics lags behind the positive changes that have been made in school.

Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities receive carefully tailored support. Staff routinely adapt learning for these pupils. Pupils get the help that they need to be ready for the next stages of their education.

Pupils behave well and know what is expected of them. They rise to these expectations. From the early years onwards, children quickly settle to new routines. Across the school, pupils benefit from consistently positive relationships with adults and each other. Bullying is rare. If it happens, leaders take swift action to make sure that it stops. Leaders take well-considered action to reduce any barriers to attendance that pupils might face. Overall, pupils attend well.

Leaders make their vision, to open up the world to pupils, a reality. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their sense of citizenship. Pupils take this citizenship beyond the school gates, for example by delivering Christmas cards and hot chocolate to local residents. Others sing for patients in hospital. These experiences help pupils to be prepared for their future lives.

Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that staff design and select tasks that help pupils to consistently acquire the learning that they need.
 - Leaders should embed the improvements they have made to the curriculum in writing and mathematics so that these improvements are reflected in pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2.
 - Leaders should embed the recent improvements to the teaching of handwriting so that pupils' handwriting becomes more consistent across the subjects that they study.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Charlotte Carter.

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, head of school, other senior leaders, some governors, including the chair, staff and pupils in the school during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils in the school.

Executive Headteacher: Mark Power

Lead inspector:

Jen Sloan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Nichola Tomkow, His Majesty's 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 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

56

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

70

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

14.29%

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

10.71%

Well above 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

19.64%

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 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	35%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	10%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	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)	60%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	42%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	10%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	64%	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	58%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	30%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	82%	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	22%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	22%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	44%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

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

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	22%	68%	-45 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	56%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (revised)	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	22%	78%	-56 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	44%	80%	-35 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

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

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.6%	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 (2 term)	13.7%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	11.5%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	3.6%	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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