

Witherley Church of England Primary School

Address: Church Road, Witherley, Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 3NA

Unique reference number (URN): 120172

Inspection report: 23 June 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.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Leaders are persistent and ensure that pupils attend school often. They promote high attendance at every opportunity. As a result, the attendance of all pupils as a group remains consistently above the national average. Leaders closely monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality and act quickly when concerns arise. Leaders and staff remove barriers to pupils' regular attendance. The school's skilful work with parents and carers has led to sustained improvements in attendance for those pupils who previously struggled to attend school well. Pupils' persistent absence is very low and continues to decline.

Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and consistently meet leaders' high expectations. Leaders have established an environment that is highly supportive to learning. Pupils show high levels of self-discipline and dedication to their learning throughout the day. When pupils require additional support, staff provide this effectively through adapted, tailored, and responsive strategies that are embedded fully in school life. Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is not an issue. They know that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. During social times, pupils play together happily, with older pupils looking after their younger friends. Lunchtimes are calm and pupils are highly respectful to all adults. They strive to earn the 'golden lunchbox' for modelling the school rules.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils achieve well. Typically, pupils make secure progress through the curriculum. They build appropriate knowledge and skills from their individual starting points. Pupils' attainment over time in national tests is positive. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who progress well through the curriculum. Phonics outcomes are equally positive. Pupils read with fluency and confidence.

Pupils develop helpful independent learning skills, such as evaluating their own work, which prepares them well for the next stage of education. Across the wider curriculum, pupils show age-appropriate understanding and use ambitious vocabulary in several subjects, for example when explaining geographical and mathematical concepts in detail.

Pupils are typically well prepared for their next steps. They become confident learners and communicators. Year 6 pupils have the curriculum knowledge and skills that they need to move on to secondary school with confidence.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. It sets out clearly what teachers should teach and when so that pupils build their knowledge and skills gradually over time. Key vocabulary is identified for pupils to learn in each subject, at each stage. Leaders review the

impact of the curriculum and teaching continually. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how well it is taught. Leaders provide high-quality professional learning to improve staff expertise. For example, new approaches to the teaching of writing have had a positive impact on the quality of pupils' written work.

Important knowledge such as early reading, spelling, handwriting and number facts are a top priority. Phonics is taught in a structured and consistent way. Staff's subject knowledge is generally secure, and teaching is clear and purposeful. Teachers model learning well and use routines that help pupils understand what to do. Occasionally, staff do not use checks on pupils' learning as effectively as they could to inform their decisions about what to teach next. Sometimes, opportunities to deepen pupils' learning are overlooked.

Staff make suitable adaptations to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who face other challenges. They use additional resources and carefully considered teaching strategies to enable pupils with SEND to progress well.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This school is inclusive and committed to meeting the needs of all pupils. Staff understand and know pupils well. Leaders review pupils' emotional and academic progress often to identify any emerging needs early. They also monitor the impact of the support provided. Parents and carers and pupils play a valued and important role as partners in this process. When necessary, leaders work with other professionals and external agencies. Together, they agree on the strategies and approaches needed to help pupils be successful.

Ensuring consistently responsive classroom practice for pupils' emerging needs remains an ongoing priority for leaders. Leaders actively refine and develop their plans for inclusion. These actions typically support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils effectively. Pupils benefit from tailored support for their emotional and social needs. This is prioritised by staff so that pupils quickly gain a sense of belonging and are ready to learn.

Leaders use additional funding appropriately to provide tailored academic and pastoral support for disadvantaged pupils and any pupils who may face challenging circumstances. As a result, these pupils achieve well from their starting points, attend school often and access fully a range of learning and enrichment experiences.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are committed to providing the best possible education and care to all pupils. Their actions reflect their vision of 'enabling all children to fulfil their unique potential; emotionally, academically, physically, socially and spiritually'. The school and close-knit community work together closely to try to achieve this vision. Leaders and those responsible for governance know the school's strengths and areas for development well. They have identified the priorities for improving the school accurately and have developed precise plans to outline how these will be addressed. Every decision made has the pupils' best interests at heart.

Governors are effective. They share leaders' vision for the school and work collaboratively to secure ongoing development. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding is a priority. Governors assure themselves of the impact of leaders' work by providing appropriate support and challenge.

The school has a real 'family feel', where staff, pupils, parents and carers are valued and supported well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, typically describing it as a 'wonderful village school and a school to be proud of'. Leaders empower staff and provide effective professional development so that they can thrive in their careers. Leaders and governors are very mindful of the pressures that working in a small school can bring. Staff speak highly of the leadership in the school. They value the care and consideration leaders give to their wellbeing and workload.

Leaders, staff, parents and governors are united in their determination to ensure that pupils learn in a 'safe, happy, inclusive Christian environment that nurtures the individuality of each and every pupil'.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's core values of 'grow together as a community, embracing difference and diversity' are lived out in daily school life. Leaders have created an environment that celebrates individuality, welcomes all and fosters a genuine sense of belonging. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school. Leaders have prioritised teaching the importance of respecting differences and treating everyone fairly. Pupils understand the value of difference and see how their own lives can be enhanced by learning about other cultures and religions, although their understanding of these is less secure and developed than other topics they have learned. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of important British values. They demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of others' views and beliefs. Pupils speak knowledgeably about keeping themselves safe online and within the community. They can recognise the features of a healthy relationship and understand how to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to contribute to school life. Many extra-curricular activities, such as crafts and drawing, are led by pupils. Pupils give kind, respectful feedback to others when holding auditions for the eagerly awaited 'Witherley's Got Talent' competition. Educational visits and residential trips enrich pupils' experiences. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access the school's rich offer. Pupils actively support charitable events. They help others and develop a sense of social responsibility. The school and local community come together often. From Easter bonnet parades and maypole dancing, to singing in the nearby church, the sense of community spirit is prominent.

The pastoral support is a strength of the school. Staff help pupils to build positive, respectful relationships with their peers and learn how to manage their emotions. Pupils, parents and carers are positive about pastoral support, which they value highly. This enables pupils to feel confident, cared for and secure at school.

Needs attention

Early years

Needs attention 

The early years curriculum is not designed closely enough around the knowledge and skills that children need to know and remember. There is still more to do to ensure that learning activities consistently have a clear purpose and support children to learn the intended knowledge. That said, leaders are ambitious for children to achieve well. They have rightly identified that the early years curriculum needs to be strengthened, particularly the quality of independent learning activities.

Children's wellbeing is a top priority. Staff ensure that children feel safe and valued from the very start. Children settle well and follow clear routines. They care for each other and show respect when learning together. Children behave beautifully and attend well. They demonstrate growing independence, resilience and social awareness. They understand the importance of healthy choices, such as drinking water and wearing sun hats during hot weather, and show empathy towards others.

Children generally achieve well from their starting points and are developing key early literacy and numeracy skills. They typically acquire the knowledge that they need to read and write through the school's phonics programme. Staff teach this well and with fidelity. Staff know children well and provide effective support to meet individual needs, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Pupils are proud to belong to this small, welcoming village school. Staff ensure that every pupil feels a valued part of this close-knit community. They look after pupils well and understand their individual needs. Pupils feel safe, nurtured and respected. They say that bullying is not an issue. Pupils are confident that staff will support them with any difficulties they may encounter.

Pupils behave extremely well and are keen to learn. They follow the school's well-established routines and learning takes place without interruption. Kindness and courtesy permeate throughout the school. Pupils, including children in the early years, have beautiful manners and they look after each other. They model the school's Christian values of 'let your light shine' and 'striving together for excellence'.

Pupils' attendance is high because they value being in 'this great school'. They arrive promptly each day with smiles on their faces and talk enthusiastically about the importance of learning. Lessons get off to a calm, purposeful start. Early morning routines focus on key skills. This helps to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the day ahead. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing other barriers to learning receive effective support and achieve well. Outdoor learning in the woodland area is a well-established approach used to support some pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy helping out in school and taking on leadership roles, such as leading drawing and computing clubs. These

experiences and opportunities enrich pupils' learning, and foster a sense of responsibility. Pupils make valuable contributions to the local community and the nearby church.

The school has high expectations of every pupil to achieve well. Pupils leave the school as well-rounded individuals, ready to embrace the challenges of secondary education and life beyond school. Nonetheless, inconsistencies in the curriculum in the early years mean that some children are not prepared as well as they could be for key stage 1.

Next steps

- Leaders should identify the precise knowledge and skills that children in early years should learn, and ensure that learning activities consistently have a clear purpose to support children to learn the intended knowledge.
 - Leaders should ensure that they support staff to consistently adapt their teaching in the moment and based on their ongoing assessments, so that pupils' opportunities to progress and deepen their learning are maximised.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Mark Essex.

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, staff, pupils and parents and carers. They also spoke with the school's improvement partner from the local authority, and met with members of the board of governors, including the chair of governors.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character and is in the Diocese of Leicester. The school's last section 48 inspection was in July 2024.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Debbie Middleton

Lead inspector:

Kirsty Norbury, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Kyna Adkins, 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 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

99

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

106

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)

10.10%

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

2.02%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.12%

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	64%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	53%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	80%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average

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	73%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	60%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	80%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	S	46%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	S	62%	S
2024/25 (final)	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	S	59%	S
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	S	60%	S
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	S	68%	S
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	S	80%	S
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	S	78%	S
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	S	80%	S
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	4.4%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.9%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.8%	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)	9.3%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.5%	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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