

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Address: Roman Road, Heaton Norris, St Mary's Rc Primary School, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 1RF

Unique reference number (URN): 150203

Inspection report: 14 July 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 ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils quickly secure the basic knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, they access learning confidently and successfully. This success is reflected in the school's published outcomes. Pupils who are disadvantaged often outperform non-disadvantaged peers nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well from their starting points. Leaders ensure that pupils, regardless of their circumstances or the point at which they join the school, develop secure and detailed knowledge across the curriculum.

The high quality work in pupils' books reflects their depth of knowledge across the subjects they study. They make secure progress through the curriculum and remember what they learn. Pupils articulate learning with enthusiasm. For example, they talk in detail about topics, such as the water cycle, Isaac Newton and gravity.

At all stages, including at the end of early years, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children get off to an extremely positive start in the early years. Leaders ensure that the curriculum clearly sets out what children should learn. Highly trained and skilful staff bring this well-designed curriculum to life.

Many children begin school with skills well below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. Staff understand this and focus on helping children develop their speech, vocabulary and confidence. They share leaders' high ambition for all children. Staff check children's learning rigorously. They spot additional needs early. Children with barriers to learning and/or wellbeing get the support they need to thrive.

Children learn phonics effectively through daily, structured sessions. Staff use actions, repetition and clear modelling to help children to recognise the sounds that letters make. Books are well matched to children's phonics knowledge. This helps them to grow in confidence. Children develop secure handwriting and number formation. Purposeful staff and child interactions further strengthen early reading, writing and mathematics provision.

Children access outdoor learning with curiosity and confidence. They benefit from a wealth of activities and opportunities to develop their creativity and imaginative play, as well as their physical development. Children play harmoniously, they share and laugh together.

Relationships between staff and children are highly positive. Staff work closely with families to ensure that children feel safe and secure. Consequently, children achieve extremely well and transition seamlessly into Year 1.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders share a clear, ambitious vision for the school. They have a detailed understanding of the school, its pupils and the community. This enables leaders to take purposeful action to bring about positive change. In recent years, the school has experienced significant staff turnover. However, this has been skilfully managed by leaders. High expectations have been maintained so that pupils' wellbeing and achievement remain a priority. The relentless drive to improve outcomes for all pupils extends to the local governing body and trustees, who are fully involved with school life.

Leaders precisely identify and prioritise actions for improvement. They do the right things in the right order. Leaders take timely and responsive actions to meet any changing need in the school's context. The decisions they make enable the school to further refine areas of its work in the best interests of pupils.

Trustees and governors are committed to their roles. They have an accurate view of the school's performance and fulfil their legal duties. They provide robust challenge and support to leaders.

Staff training is highly effective and linked to the school's improvement priorities. Leaders carefully consider staff's workload and wellbeing when making decisions to improve the school. Staff feel well supported and valued. They are extremely proud to work at the school and value how leaders care for their workload and wellbeing.

The majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. They value the difference that the school makes to their children's lives and the care that staff show to them.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders are rigorous in their approach to promoting positive attendance. They track data carefully and quickly identify where to allocate support. Leaders know families and the community well. They balance high expectations with an understanding of pupils' individual circumstances. This enables them to make effective adjustments to support pupils to attend more regularly. As a result, rates of attendance are broadly in line with the national average. Leaders' actions have led to the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent reducing rapidly. However, there is more work to do as some pupils continue to miss too many days of school.

Caring, positive relationships underpin the school's behaviour policy. Staff apply the policy consistently. In lessons, pupils work purposefully and cooperatively. They share ideas and contribute with enthusiasm. Pupils' positive behaviour extends beyond lesson time. Around the school and during social times, pupils act with kindness, respect and consideration. Consequently, bullying and discrimination are rare. Pupils know that this type of behaviour would not be tolerated. Pupils know that staff will guide and support them during social times should any issues arise. Staff skilfully support pupils' social, emotional and mental health

needs. For example, small group interventions and 'soft starts' to the day help to ensure that pupils' needs are well met.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. The well-sequenced curriculum sets out precisely what pupils need to learn at each stage. This includes specific details about the knowledge that pupils need to acquire and apply in mixed-age classes. Leaders carefully consider ways of improving the curriculum. For example, recent developments have further strengthened the teaching of foundational knowledge, handwriting, spelling and grammar.

Supporting pupils to become fluent and independent readers is a key priority at this school. Staff deliver the phonics and reading curriculum with expertise and accuracy. When pupils fall behind, staff intervene swiftly. They provide effective support which helps pupils to keep up with their peers. Across other subjects, teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to discuss learning with their peers. This encourages pupils to find and use new vocabulary to support and enhance their learning.

Generally, staff teach the curriculum effectively. They follow the school's agreed approach to lesson structure. This ensures that pupils have opportunities to review and recall their learning. However, occasionally, some staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding, through questioning, as carefully as they could. This reduces opportunities for some pupils to address errors in their work.

Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well from their starting points. Staff receive the training that they need to provide pupils with the support that they need. As a result, these pupils learn effectively alongside their peers.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have clear systems in place for swift and accurate identification of pupils' needs. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive extensive training to develop their expertise in identifying and reducing any barriers to learning that pupils have. They use information from a range of sources to build a detailed picture of each pupil's needs. As a result, staff make careful adaptations so that pupils, including those with SEND and other barriers to learning, access the same learning alongside their peers.

Leaders support pupils known or previously known to social care with sensitivity, care and consistency. They work closely with families and other professionals. Plans are reviewed often to keep support effective. Leaders ensure that pupils with additional needs and any other barriers to learning are included in the full life of the school. This includes how they access learning, develop leadership opportunities and benefit from wider experiences that promote belonging and success.

The school uses additional funding effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit

from carefully planned support and a range of experiences that broaden their understanding of the world.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a well-structured personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils build important knowledge and skills progressively from Nursery to Year 6. Pupils learn about the risks that they might face. This includes when they are in school, in the wider community or at home. Leaders ensure that all safety messages are regularly revisited through assemblies, PSHE lessons and in the wider curriculum. Pupils can identify the practical strategies that they can use to keep themselves safe. For example, using the tram safely, being safe around water, protecting themselves from the sun and how to respond to online bullying. They understand the importance of making sensible, well-thought-out decisions in difficult situations.

Pupils learn about healthy and unhealthy relationships. They have an age-appropriate understanding of consent, personal boundaries and friendships. They understand the importance of seeking help when needed. Pupils know who to speak to if they are worried or concerned. They can describe how designated calm areas and 'Zones of Regulation' support them in managing their feelings and emotions.

Pupils treat others fairly and think that differences should be celebrated. While St Mary's is proud of its Catholic identity, it also promotes the importance of understanding other beliefs and cultures. This helps pupils to develop respect for diversity and difference. Consequently, pupils grow socially and morally alongside their academic learning. They learn about the importance of fundamental British values, such as individual liberty, the rule of law and democracy. They also learn about their important role in society. Pupils are encouraged to consider different viewpoints. This helps them to develop respectful and tolerant attitudes.

Leaders have enriched the curriculum through a well-sequenced programme of educational visits and wider experiences, including residential, trips to the beach and farm experiences. This encourages pupils to engage in activities beyond technology which embrace the great outdoors. These planned opportunities broaden pupils' horizons and successfully deepen their learning. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from these experiences.

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

Pupils are proud to attend St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School. They are happy and motivated to learn. Pupils are respectful to staff and to each other. They understand and live up to staff's high expectations of their behaviour and conduct. They welcome visitors warmly and are excellent ambassadors for their school. Pupils take great care of their learning environment. They play their part in keeping it organised and tidy. For example, in the early years, children routinely share the well-rehearsed 'team work makes the dream work' mantra and know that 'tidy up time' is everyone's responsibility.

Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. If there are any problems, pupils know that staff will help to resolve them quickly. The school rules are clear. Pupils, including those in the early years, follow them to the letter. Staff are positive role models. They praise pupils for their efforts and conduct. Consequently, the school is calm and orderly.

Pupils value learning. They focus during lessons and they want to succeed. Pupils attain well in national tests. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils, who regularly achieve higher than other pupils nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress from their individual starting points. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy school. Increasingly, they attend well. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing rapidly. However, some pupils still miss too many school days. Pupils fulfil a wide range of leadership roles. This provides them with the chance to step up and be positive role models in their school community. For instance, they have the opportunity to be a faith leader, a school council member or a wellbeing warrior. Pupils develop a sense of pride and belonging from their contribution to and participation in these groups.

Next steps

- Leaders should further embed their work to ensure all pupils attend school regularly and the persistent absence of some pupils is further reduced.
- Leaders should continue their work to develop consistency in agreed teaching approaches, including effective use of questioning.

About this inspection

This school is part of Emmaus Catholic Academy 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), Daniel Copley, and overseen by a board of trustees, who are referred to internally as directors, chaired by Catherine Anderson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Following our updated 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 and trust-level leaders who are currently supporting the school. Inspectors also spoke to the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.

The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, including its chair. She also met with a group of trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school converted to become an academy in January 2024 and joined Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust at the same time. This inspection was the school's first inspection since its predecessor school of the same name was inspected in December 2023.

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford. The most recent section 48 inspection, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in October 2025.

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Clare Baron

Lead inspector:

Nichola Tomkow, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Andrew Marlow, Ofsted 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 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

101

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

164

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)

71.11%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

4.95%

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

24.75%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well 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)

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		61%	
2024/25 (final)	68%	62%	Close to average
2023/24		61%	
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24		74%	
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (final)	79%	72%	Close to average
2023/24		72%	
2022/23		71%	

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		73%	
2024/25 (final)	84%	74%	Above
2023/24		73%	
2022/23		73%	

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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	73%	47%	Above
2023/24		46%	
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	
2024/25 (final)	91%	63%	Above
2023/24		62%	
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	91%	59%	Above
2023/24		58%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23		58%	

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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	73%	61%	Close to average
2023/24		59%	
2022/23		59%	

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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	73%	69%	4 pp
2023/24		67%	
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	91%	81%	10 pp
2023/24		80%	
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	91%	78%	13 pp
2023/24		78%	
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	73%	81%	-8 pp
2023/24		79%	
2022/23		79%	

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)	5.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.0%	5.5%	Above

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)	16.0%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	33.7%	14.6%	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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