

St James' CofE Junior School

Address: Blake Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 1NY

Unique reference number (URN): 112362

Inspection report: 22 September 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 typically want to attend regularly because they enjoy school. Leaders have robust systems in place to improve pupils' attendance if it begins to cause concern. They are tenacious in their approach and, as a result, attendance is consistently above national averages for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and those known or previously known to social care. Leaders are ambitious to improve attendance even further until pupils' attendance is the best it can be. Leaders have made careful and strategic decisions to support their work on attendance, for example, in relation to improving the curriculum and offering a wealth of clubs and other enrichment opportunities. These opportunities add to the school's offer to pupils and, as a result, attendance is above national averages.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. These expectations are underpinned by positive relationships and mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils typically behave well. They are friendly and welcoming. Pupils interact confidently and politely with staff and visitors. Pupils benefit from calm and purposeful classroom environments that are helpful to learning. Pupils generally demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Staff ensure that pupils who need additional help to understand and manage their behaviour receive appropriate support. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders know individual pupils and their needs very well. They regularly monitor pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are identified and that effective interventions are implemented quickly. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide targeted interventions, pastoral support and wider opportunities which enhance pupils' experiences of the world.

Leaders and staff understand the range of barriers that pupils face. These include barriers to wellbeing as well as to learning. Leaders monitor the progress and attainment of pupils. They maintain an effective culture of early identification through regular assessment, pastoral oversight and multi-agency collaboration.

Leaders work closely with a range of external professionals to secure appropriate support for pupils. Staff increasingly use inclusive approaches and practical adaptations, such as visual timetables, movement breaks and workstations, to reduce barriers to learning. Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of provision and adapt support when it is not having the intended impact.

Leaders maintain a sharp focus on safeguarding and wellbeing, ensuring that pupils receive timely support and that barriers to learning are identified and addressed quickly. Leaders make appropriate use of alternative provision.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school's context and the community it serves. This helps them to create a supportive, inclusive environment where barriers to learning or wellbeing are typically overcome. This helps pupils feel safe and valued. Leaders make all decisions in pupils' best interests.

Leaders have established successful processes to identify and support pupils who face barriers to learning or wellbeing, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have a clear understanding of the range of barriers many pupils face, and they are committed to overcoming these so that pupils can thrive. Leaders have identified appropriate areas for improvement. For example, they have taken action to address aspects of writing which have not been taught consistently well, such as handwriting, spelling and grammar. Leaders recognise the importance of high-quality teaching to secure the best outcomes for all pupils, including those with SEND. They have begun work to improve teaching across all classes and subjects.

Governors understand their duties and carry them out effectively. They bring a range of suitable experience and skills to their roles. Governors offer appropriate support and challenge. Leaders engage well with the local authority and with the diocese. For example, the local authority has supported leaders in monitoring the school's work and identifying appropriate areas for improvement.

Staff appreciate leaders' and governors' consideration of their workload and wellbeing. They benefit from a range of professional learning opportunities. Although these have led to improvements, they are too recent to show a clear impact on pupils' outcomes. Parents and carers are typically positive about the school and the quality of care and education it provides for their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that the school's curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education is ambitious and carefully set out. Pupils enjoy these lessons and engage in them thoughtfully, including through discussions and debates. Staff receive appropriate training to help them deliver the content of the curriculum effectively. Pupils learn about risks to their safety and wellbeing they are likely to encounter as they grow older. This includes learning how to keep themselves safe when online and when out and about in the community.

Pupils gain a secure understanding of what makes a relationship healthy through the carefully constructed relationship and sex education programme. Older pupils learn about the physical and emotional changes which will happen to them during puberty. They have an age-appropriate understanding of the concept of consent. Through a scheme run in partnership with the local fire service, pupils learn about how to stay safe in relation to water, alcohol and drugs.

The school offers pupils a rich and varied range of wider opportunities, such as kayaking, rugby, choir, golf and music. Leaders check carefully that disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils known or previously known to social

care access the full range of activities. Visits from local employers and colleges help pupils to be aspirational and to think about their future.

Pastoral support is provided by specially trained staff and is available to all pupils. Pupils know how to access this specialist help when they need it and can give examples of how it has helped them in the past. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps them to understand the importance of healthy relationships, diversity and equality. Pupils learn about, and show respect for, different faiths. They can talk about key aspects of a range of different faiths. This helps pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Over time, results in national tests at the end of key stage 2 have been below national averages and below those of similar schools. Too many pupils do not consistently secure the most important knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that they are not as well prepared for their next steps in education as they should be.

Pupils' work shows that many now typically achieve in line with expectations for their age. However, this is not consistent across classes, subjects and groups of pupils. This is because some pupils still have gaps in their foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that, sometimes, they move on to new learning before they have secured the key knowledge they need to build upon.

Leaders' recent actions are starting to make a difference, but it is too soon to see a sustained improvement in pupils' results.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Although leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that sets out the important knowledge pupils should learn, there are inconsistencies in how effectively staff check on pupils' learning. This means that, in some instances, misconceptions are not identified and addressed. As a result, for some pupils, gaps in learning remain over time and become embedded. The curriculum is designed to build knowledge logically over time. Reading is prioritised. Pupils who join the school at earlier stages of reading generally benefit from effective phonics teaching from well-trained staff.

When teaching is most effective, teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions promptly. They encourage pupils to think carefully and to discuss their learning. Teachers typically use a range of helpful adaptations to ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, can access the learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers use physical resources and structured explanations to ensure that pupils with SEND develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. This helps them to access the same

curriculum as their peers. However, in some subjects and classes, activities are not as well designed as they should be to help pupils build knowledge securely over time. Leaders have identified appropriate areas for improvement and are working to ensure that highly effective teaching and assessment is consistent across subjects and classes.

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

Pupils understand and live up to the school's Christian values which include friendship, respect and forgiveness. Pupils routinely show kindness to one another and build positive relationships with their peers and with staff. Each morning, staff greet pupils warmly. This helps pupils to feel safe and part of this friendly school community. Pupils are well-mannered. They move around the school sensibly and show positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils appreciate the many opportunities leaders provide for them to try new experiences designed to build their character. For example, they take on challenges in sporting competitions or on adventurous school trips. Older pupils build their teamwork and independence ready for secondary school on a residential visit. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. This builds their self-esteem and confidence.

Pupils are keen to help with the day-to-day running of the school. They show commitment to the school community by taking on a range of duties. On the playground, older pupils serve as play leaders, leading games for their peers to enjoy. Other pupils take on roles as librarians in the school's library. These roles help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. Within the school's caring ethos, pupils feel safe. If bullying happens, staff deal with it promptly so that it stops.

Pupils enjoy school so they typically attend regularly. However, pupils' outcomes in national tests are not consistently in line with national averages. Leaders have taken action to improve the school's curriculum and how effectively it is taught. As a result, achievement is starting to improve, though there is more work to do. In some subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders and staff place high priority on the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have invested in staff training to ensure that staff know how best to support these pupils. As a result, these pupils generally make good progress from their starting points.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen the precision of checks on learning and the impact of feedback so that gaps and misconceptions in pupils' foundational knowledge are identified and addressed promptly, enabling all pupils to achieve as well as they can, particularly in letter formation, handwriting and spelling.

- In some subjects, although the curriculum is appropriately ambitious and fully sequenced, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This is because they have not learned the full curriculum as it is set out. Leaders should check that all subject curriculums are taught as planned.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff consistently design activities which build on prior knowledge and provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to rehearse and apply key concepts. This will help pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding over time.
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About this inspection

The chair of the governing body in this school is Ms Sarah Heywood.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders including the special educational needs coordinator during the inspection.

The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with pupils, staff, parents and carers, and considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Carlisle. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school was in June 2025.

The school currently makes use of 1 registered alternative provision, including 0 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Jacqueline Rushton

Lead inspector:

Cleone Cunningham, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Sarah Price, 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 22 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

115

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: 268

School capacity

240

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)

46.09%

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: 26.5%

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

6.96%

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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.00%

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	43%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	31%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	39%	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	53%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	46%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	46%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	71%	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	64%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	50%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	36%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	36%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	43%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	43%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	55%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	58%	Close to average

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%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	58%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average

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	36%	68%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	69%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	67%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	25%	66%	-41 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	43%	80%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	43%	81%	-38 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	80%	-13 pp
2022/23 (final)	25%	78%	-53 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	55%	78%	-23 pp
2024/25 (final)	36%	78%	-43 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	77%	-15 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	58%	79%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	79%	-17 pp

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.7%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.9%	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)	9.2%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	12.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	17.6%	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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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