

St Catherine's RC School

Address: Vale Drive, Barnet, Hertfordshire, EN5 2ED

Unique reference number (URN): 101333

Inspection report: 9 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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

All pupils achieve highly at St. Catherine's. This is because of leaders' deliberate focus on high-quality learning across the curriculum. This is reflected in consistently high outcomes in national tests. Teachers deliberately support pupils to access learning across the curriculum. They make sure that younger pupils build secure basics in reading, writing and mathematics, with clear attention also given to developing spoken language.

Pupils articulate their thinking confidently, listen carefully to one another and engage maturely in partner discussions. This helps to deepen their knowledge across the curriculum.

Pupils' written work is high quality. Pupils apply presentation skills and subject vocabulary across all subjects in the curriculum beyond English and mathematics. They demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding and recall previous learning fluently. This is also the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who also make excellent progress from their starting points. All pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in their education. They leave as confident, resilient learners with highly effective communication skills.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils at St. Catherine's typically attend school well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of attendance patterns and the barriers that may prevent individual pupils from attending. Attendance support is proactive and highly personalised. Work undertaken to support those families whose attendance falls below what is expected is highly effective. Where attendance concerns persist, leaders take appropriate action while maintaining supportive engagement with families and external professionals.

Leaders have established clear expectations for behaviour that are understood and applied consistently across the school. These expectations start in the early years. Leaders have embedded a culture where positive behaviour, respect and inclusion are the expected norm. Pupils are kind to each other, responsible and demonstrate positive behaviours in all they do, including with their attitude to learning. They build positive relationships with their peers and the adults in the setting. There are very few incidents of bullying here. If bullying does occur, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

The school's emphasis on developing pupils' speaking skills enables pupils to communicate with each other effectively. Pupils who find this difficult receive structured support to help them grow in confidence and resilience. This support ensures that they are increasingly able to access routines, communicate their needs and participate alongside their peers. As a result, pupils become more confident to follow routines, express their needs and take part in learning alongside their peers.

Leaders have designed a highly ambitious curriculum that is well sequenced. It supports pupils to increase their knowledge and deepen their understanding over time. The curriculum places a great emphasis on language development and oracy across subjects. Leaders have established approaches and routines that encourage meaningful discussion and high-quality classroom talk.

Teachers skilfully improve pupils' speaking skills. For example, they do so by repeating and improving what pupils have said by adding in new vocabulary. This focus on spoken language, as well as reading and writing, supports pupils to access learning across the curriculum while also improving their vocabulary and communication skills. For example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 study poetry in depth, and children in the early years learn songs and rhymes.

Staff training is effective. Staff regularly watch expert colleagues and receive feedback on their own teaching. This cycle ensures that improvements in teaching embed over time. Consequently, staff at St. Catherine's have the skills they need and they deliver the intended curriculum consistently. They provide the correct support at the right time to all pupils in the classroom, including those with barriers to their learning.

Teachers check pupils' understanding frequently. All teachers insist on high standards of spelling, grammar and writing across all subjects.

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders are ambitious for their children in early years. The curriculum here has been tailored to the specific needs of the children. It focuses on stories, songs and rhymes. This develops pupils' communication and language and personal development from the start of the early years. Adult-child interactions are purposeful and nurturing. Adults consistently model the language that they wish pupils to use. This expands pupils' listening skills and their vocabulary. All this enables children to develop skills that they need for future learning. They are very well prepared for their next steps.

The provision for 2- and 3-year-olds reflects leaders' accurate understanding of children's developmental needs. Appropriate staffing and carefully established routines help children to develop confidence, independence and a readiness for learning. Children's emotional wellbeing is prioritised through consistent approaches and routines, contributing to a calm and nurturing atmosphere.

Leaders use children's starting points to track their progress over time. They ensure that resources and adult support are tailored to children's individual needs. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported highly effectively. For those children just starting school, leaders personalise the induction into school. For example, they carefully increase the time that children spend in the setting each day so that they feel safe and secure. Parents are valued partners in children's learning. Leaders organise frequent opportunities for families to engage with support and interventions where appropriate.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders demonstrate a detailed understanding of the needs, strengths and barriers experienced by pupils with barriers to their learning. Leaders' rigorous induction procedures enable them to identify swiftly any barriers children may have and engage the support of services, where needed, to help each child to access learning. Leaders' knowledge is rooted in ongoing monitoring, professional discussion and individual pupil tracking. Alongside this, leaders build constructive professional relationships with pupils and their families. Leaders have identified that the processes for analysing the impact of their support could be even sharper. They are introducing systems to achieve this so that their provision benefits their pupils with even greater precision.

The school uses additional funding accurately to enhance pupils' experiences. When a child needs extra help, the school works together with families and other professionals in and out of school to put the right support in place. This support is purposefully designed to reduce any barriers to pupils' learning, participation and wellbeing. Teachers use simple tools and short activities to help pupils to feel settled, know what is happening next and stay ready to learn. For example, there are planned times for pupils to get up and move so that they can refocus.

Teachers build independence and resilience through everyday classroom routines. They focus on the things that make the biggest difference for pupils.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and governors demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's strengths and the priorities for improvement. Well-established processes to measure the school's progress, speak with staff and check the impact of their work ensure that improvements are prioritised and in the best interests of pupils. For example, leaders have recently changed their systems for checking what pupils have learned so that they can further streamline analysis of their impact.

At St. Catherine's, staff development is an ongoing cycle. It includes learning and refining new teaching tools through practice and coaching from other teachers. Leaders have deliberately created a culture where teaching knowledge is shared and developed collectively. Leaders make use of external expertise purposefully through membership of professional associations, contact with specialist advisers and work with local partnerships. This outward-facing approach ensures that professional learning is informed by current educational thinking and research-informed practice.

Leaders at all levels make a significant and positive contribution to school improvement. There is a clear culture of shared responsibility in which middle leaders actively evaluate and identify next steps, driving improvement within their areas. The school provides subject leaders with dedicated time to support other teachers and check that the quality of teaching in their subject remains high. Improvements in subject teaching also contribute to improvements in whole-school priorities. Senior leaders maintain a detailed understanding of what works well, where to refine and how to sustain improvements over time.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive in school. They appreciate that expectations are clear, communication is effective and changes are implemented thoughtfully. They say that concerns can be raised openly, and this openness contributes positively to both their wellbeing and their ability to meet pupils' needs effectively.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders have developed a comprehensive personal development curriculum. Pupils acquire secure and detailed knowledge and are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders have adapted their provision over time to ensure that learning remains relevant to pupils' needs. They use their detailed understanding of their school context and its pupils to do this. For example, the school has sensitively enhanced education around potentially harmful substances through support from the local authority. The curriculum helps younger children to understand and manage their emotions and explore ideas such as individual liberty and financial understanding. As a result, pupils understand how to be tolerant, treat others fairly and respect differences.

Beyond the curriculum, personal development is tailored to all pupils' needs and aspirations. Opportunities include forest school, Year 6 'citizenship days', residential visits and careers-related learning. These help pupils to develop a wider understanding of the world and their role in it. Pupils also learn to sing, play instruments and perform in a rock band. They have the opportunity to make music alongside professional orchestras at prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' participation. They proactively identify those pupils who may need encouragement or additional support to engage. Therefore, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities participate fully.

Leaders have a nuanced and accurate understanding of pupils. They use this knowledge to identify and respond to any pastoral and personal needs that pupils may have. This work positively impacts pupils' attitudes, confidence and participation. Pupils are articulate, reflective and respectful. They demonstrate confidence, express their views clearly and engage thoughtfully with issues relating to diversity, equality and inclusion.

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

Pupils are happy at St Catherine's. Leaders have embedded a culture driven by the school's values, including integrity, excellence and love. These values help to instil in pupils a sense of belonging. They talk positively about trusting relationships with both peers and adults. Pupils describe feeling safe, valued and included, as well as how adults support them when they need help.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They experience a calm, cooperative environment with an unrelenting focus on learning. Pupils here are articulate and enthused by all that the school has to offer through the curriculum and the wider offer. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have other barriers to their learning also participate fully. Pupils receive the support that they need here to thrive. As a result, they achieve highly and they

want to be in school. This is reflected by pupils' high attendance rates and preparedness for their next steps.

Leaders organise extensive opportunities for pupils that develop their leadership skills and enable them to contribute positively to school life. These roles provide authentic opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and influence school life. They include school council representatives, sports and house captains, science ambassadors, sustainability champions and Transport for London ambassadors. Pupils also undertake environmental campaigning, produce podcasts and promote children's rights. These meaningful opportunities help pupils to develop confidence, responsibility and a sense of civic participation. Pupils understand and participate in democratic processes involved in securing these roles.

Pupils also benefit from a wide range of educational outings that deepen their understanding. They speak enthusiastically about their experiences and can explain clearly what they have learned. Visits to the Houses of Parliament and the Tower of London, for example, have strengthened pupils' understanding of democracy, history and citizenship.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work across all areas. They should seek continued development, overcoming barriers and challenges, including embedding their new assessment recording system, to help them to effectively analyse impact and manage ongoing changes to the school's context.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Alessia Errico.

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, deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and members of school staff. The lead inspector also met with 5 governors, including the chair of governors, during the inspection.

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. It is in the Diocese of Westminster. Its last section 48 inspection was March 2026.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school also runs a Nursery provision under the same registration. This also includes provision for 2-year-olds.

The school offers its own breakfast and after-school care.

Headteacher: Maureen Kelly

Lead inspector:

Samantha Ingram, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Rutinderjit Mahil-Pooni, Ofsted Inspector

Colette Shulver, His Majesty's Inspector

Tom O'Donnell, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

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

School and pupil context

Total pupils

470

Well above 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

471

Well above 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)

4.75%

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.5%

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

1.91%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.85%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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	78%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	85%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	92%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	97%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	86%	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	84%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	85%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	79%	71%	Above

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	91%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	95%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	97%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	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	67%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

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	90%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	60%	Close to average

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	76%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	80%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	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	86%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	100%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average

‘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	67%	68%	-1 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	69%	11 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 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	90%	80%	11 pp
2024/25 (final)	100%	81%	19 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	78%	-12 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	76%	78%	-2 pp
2024/25 (final)	80%	78%	2 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	77%	-11 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	86%	80%	6 pp
2024/25 (final)	100%	81%	19 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

‘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)	3.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.1%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.7%	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)	5.1%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	1.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	2.8%	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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