

Garston Church of England Primary School

Address: Holman Road, Garston, Liverpool, Merseyside, L19 5NS

Unique reference number (URN): 145735

Inspection report: 30 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.

Exceptional

Early years

Exceptional 

The school has created an exceptional provision in the early years that gives every child an excellent start to their education. Knowledgeable leadership brings clear direction and expertise to the provision. Leaders prioritise recruiting skilled staff who understand how young children learn. As a result, children benefit from high-quality interactions that help them to make rapid progress from their starting points.

From the age of two, children follow an ambitious curriculum that develops their knowledge, vocabulary and understanding over time. Communication and language are at the heart of the provision. Children learn to listen carefully, concentrate and express themselves with growing confidence. Extremely effective transition arrangements, including the school's 'Get Ready with Teddy' programme, help children to settle quickly and feel ready to learn.

Teaching is highly effective. Staff balance direct teaching with opportunities for children to explore and learn independently. Clear routines and very high expectations help children develop confidence, independence and positive learning habits. Children work and play together exceptionally well and apply their learning readily across different areas of provision.

Outcomes are exceptional. From low starting point, children, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well above national expectations. Children leave Reception exceptionally well prepared for Year 1, both academically and socially. Leaders' transformational work with families helps parents and carers support learning at home and contributes to children's success.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Leaders have a strategic approach to attendance that is effective. They identify pupils who face barriers to frequent attendance and provide tailored support through close work with families and external agencies. Leaders utilise breakfast provision to improve pupils' punctuality and readiness for learning. Overall attendance is close to the national average. There has been rapid improvement this year in the attendance of those pupils who are absent most often. Leaders understand individual barriers, including medical needs and emotional difficulties, and respond appropriately. As a result, attendance is close to national figures and more pupils attend school more often. Leaders recognise that this work should continue.

Pupils behave very well. The school is calm, orderly and purposeful. Across the school, pupils engage positively in lessons and social times. They demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and settle quickly to tasks. Pupils are courteous to staff and to each other. Staff know pupils well and use consistent approaches to support regulation. Pupils value learning about zones of regulation and understand how sensory breaks help some

pupils. The approach to play at breaktime supports positive interactions across age groups. Leaders deal swiftly and effectively with any concerns about bullying or unkind behaviour and incidents are rare.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established a very successful approach to inclusion. They identify pupils' needs early and ensure that the increasing numbers of pupils who need the most support receive the right help. Staff understand pupils' needs and remove barriers to learning and participation effectively.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is planned carefully. Leaders ensure that these pupils' needs are well understood. Adaptations help these pupils to learn successfully alongside their peers, while developing confidence and independence. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders utilise additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Staff provide targeted academic support and practical help for these pupils' families. This work has a significant impact. Published outcomes show that disadvantaged pupils achieve extremely well and attain above national averages, including those for pupils who are not disadvantaged nationally.

Pupils who are known, or have previously been known, to social care benefit from trusted relationships with adults and well-coordinated support. Staff work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the help that they need.

Leaders provide close support to pupils who face social, emotional or mental health difficulties. They help families with the cost of activities and provide targeted help. As a result, pupils from all backgrounds take part in clubs, visits and other opportunities.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leadership and governance are very effective. Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. They identify the right priorities and take effective action to bring about improvements. Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils succeed, particularly those who may be vulnerable. Their work has led to an exceptional early years provision and very effective support for inclusion, and personal development and wellbeing.

Leaders place a high priority on reading, writing and mathematics. They check the impact of their work carefully and make changes when needed. As a result, actions to improve the school are having a positive effect and helping pupils to achieve well. Published outcomes have remained significantly above national averages over time.

Governors and trust leaders know the school well. They receive regular information about leaders' work and visit frequently. Those responsible for governance play an active role in evaluating the school's effectiveness and provide appropriate support and challenge. They understand the school's priorities and hold leaders to account closely for pupils' achievement and experiences. Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties, including safeguarding and safer recruitment.

Leaders support staff well. They consider workload carefully and ensure that staff have time to complete additional responsibilities. Staff value the training they receive. This is linked closely to the school's priorities and helps staff to develop their expertise.

Parents and carers, staff and external partners speak highly of the school. Leaders work closely with families, professionals and the wider community. These partnerships support pupils' achievement and wellbeing and contribute to the school's continued improvement and success.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders provide very effective leadership of personal development and wellbeing. They have designed a carefully planned programme that reflects the school's context and pupils' needs. The 'rainbow passport' helps pupils build experiences through a wide range of opportunities. Leaders promote participation through free clubs, leadership roles and residential visits from Year 2 to Year 6. As a result, pupils from vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, benefit from the school's wider offer.

Pupils are well supported to develop as confident, well-rounded young people. They gain a secure understanding of equality, diversity and different families. Pupils can confidently explain why it is important to respect people who may be different. They understand fundamental British values. They can discuss democracy, explain the importance of the rule of law and understand how this helps to keep people safe and contribute positively to society.

The personal, social and health education curriculum prepares pupils effectively for modern life. Pupils develop a detailed understanding of physical and mental health, healthy relationships and personal safety. They can explain different types of bullying and know what to do if bullying or discrimination occurs. Pupils understand that racism is unacceptable. They know how to stay safe online and offline and are aware of risks to their wellbeing.

Leaders provide highly effective pastoral support. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and nurtured by staff. They know where to seek help if they have concerns and speak positively about the support available. Pupils are happy and resilient. They talk confidently about their learning and future aspirations. By the time they leave the school, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education and for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well. Published outcomes are above national figures. Three-year averages for reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above national averages. Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well. Their attainment is above that of disadvantaged pupils nationally.

In class, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, build knowledge and skills securely from their starting points. Most pupils learn the intended curriculum and are well prepared for the next stage of education. Pupils develop secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. However, some pupils in the early stages of learning to reading do not read with enough fluency. In addition, some pupils' writing contains errors that staff do not address consistently.

Across the wider curriculum, pupils achieve well in subjects such as art, geography and science. They develop a secure understanding of key concepts and build their knowledge over time. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have high ambition for all pupils. They have designed a broad curriculum that sparks pupils' curiosity about the past, the arts and the world around them. Leaders draw on research-informed practice to shape staff training and promote a consistent approach to teaching. An emphasise on oracy ensures that pupils regularly learn and practise key vocabulary. This starts in the early years, where staff in the two-year-old provision develop children's spoken language well.

Across the school, pupils benefit from structured lessons that focus on the most important knowledge and skills. Teaching follows clear steps that help pupils develop knowledge and skills over time. Staff check pupils' understanding carefully before introducing new learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access learning alongside their peers. Skilled staff adapt activities so that these pupils can participate fully.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of early reading, writing and mathematics. Staff deliver the school's phonics programme consistently. They support reluctant readers, although some pupils would benefit from further opportunities to develop fluency. This year, leaders have focused staff training on writing. This has had a positive impact. However, approaches are not yet embedded fully and staff do not always resolve pupils' errors consistently. As a result, some pupils retain gaps in basic writing skills, including handwriting.

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

Pupils are proud of their school. They thrive because they feel valued, included and enjoy their learning. In the early years, children get an exceptional start to their education. Staff prioritise language and communication. Children quickly learn to listen carefully, speak confidently and take part in learning. Across the school, pupils enjoy learning and participate actively in lessons. They remember important information and achieve highly in national tests. Disadvantaged pupils' achievements are of particular note, with attainment significantly above that of disadvantaged pupils nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because staff provide effective support. By the end of each key stage, pupils are ready for the next step in their education.

Beyond their academic achievements, pupils get the help they need to develop as responsible young citizens. Trust, friendship and endurance are at the heart of this caring

church school. Pupils feel like they belong and build positive relationships with their peers and with staff. From the early years onwards, pupils treat one another with kindness and respect.

In lessons and around school, pupils behave very well. Staff support pupils who need extra help with their behaviour. Pupils say that they feel safe and trust adults to help them if they have concerns. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils come to school often and attendance is close to national figures. The school's work has improved the attendance of those pupils who have not come to school often enough in the past.

Pupils value the wide range of opportunities available to them. Many take on leadership roles, attend the annual residential trips and join several of the varied choice of clubs on offer. These experiences help pupils develop confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils from all backgrounds take part in these activities that enrich their experiences at Garston.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that any pupils who are not yet secure in the early stages of learning to read and write, and those with gaps in their knowledge, have regular opportunities to practise phonics and writing. This will help these pupils to develop greater accuracy, fluency and confidence.
 - Leaders should continue their work to improve pupils' attendance. This will ensure that pupils who do not attend as well as they should come to school more often.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Rainbow Education Multi 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, Gina Donaldson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dave Cadwallader.

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Liverpool. Its last section 48 inspection was October 2022.

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

This inspection took place from 30 June to 1 July 2026.

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

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. They spoke to members of the local academy council, including the chair, and the chair of the board of

trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Rachel Dean

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sharon Cowey, Ofsted Inspector

Amy Fidler, 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 30 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

238

Close to 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

210

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)

49.51%

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

2.52%

Close to 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

23.11%

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

Close to 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	81%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	86%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78%	60%	Above

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	88%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	89%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	96%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78%	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	86%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	89%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	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	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	89%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	78%	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	85%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	44%	Above

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	92%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	60%	Above

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	88%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	58%	Above

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	90%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	88%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	94%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	88%	59%	Above

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	85%	68%	18 pp
2024/25 (final)	81%	69%	12 pp
2023/24 (final)	88%	67%	20 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	66%	21 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	92%	80%	12 pp
2024/25 (final)	88%	81%	7 pp
2023/24 (final)	100%	80%	20 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	78%	9 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	88%	78%	10 pp
2024/25 (final)	88%	78%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	88%	78%	10 pp
2022/23 (final)	88%	77%	10 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	90%	80%	10 pp
2024/25 (final)	88%	81%	7 pp
2023/24 (final)	94%	79%	14 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	88%	79%	8 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)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	10.6%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.2%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.2%	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

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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