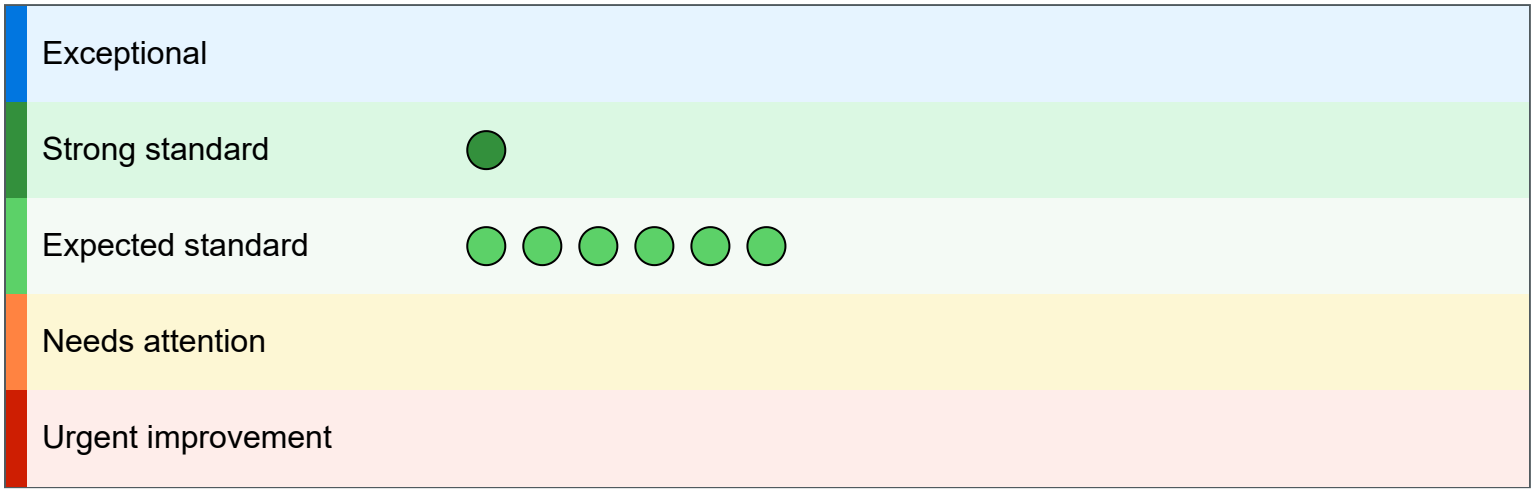
Penshurst Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address: High Street, Penshurst, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 8BX

Unique reference number (URN): 118720

Inspection report: 29 September 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders make attendance and punctuality an unwavering priority across the school. Staff skilfully identify patterns of absence and act swiftly when concerns arise. They work closely with families to remove barriers to attendance as early as possible. Regular communication between school and home reinforces the importance of attending school every day and arriving on time. Leaders celebrate high attendance and punctuality. They frequently and robustly review the attendance data to identify emerging issues. As a result, these embedded approaches help all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend school regularly and punctually. Leaders' actions have sustained attendance over time, keeping it consistently above national figures.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent across the school. Leaders have created a culture of kindness. Bullying is rare and staff deal with any unkind behaviours quickly. Pupils treat each other with respect and interact positively during social times. Staff establish clear routines and set high expectations. Pupils consistently meet these expectations without reminders. Staff provide effective support for pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour. Leaders work closely with parents to reinforce these high behaviour standards. Consequently, pupils behave calmly in lessons. This creates a highly positive learning environment for everyone.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils generally perform in line with national averages on the Year 6 national tests. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make secure progress from their starting points. As they move through the curriculum, pupils develop the most important knowledge and skills they need to access their learning. For example, pupils develop key skills in mathematics and oracy. Pupils' reading achievement is also a notable strength. Most pupils reach a higher standard in reading, above national averages. Disadvantaged pupils typically achieve well from their individual starting points. On occasion, this achievement can be limited in lessons due to inconsistent adaptations.

Pupils recall previously taught content with fluency such as around historical figures. Children in the early years accurately recall the letter sounds they have learnt. Pupils typically read with accuracy and confidence. Pupils, including those from the early years, are appropriately prepared for the next stage of learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have designed an ambitious, well sequenced curriculum. They have identified the important knowledge pupils should learn and remember, enabling pupils to build securely on prior learning. Leaders have a clear understanding of curriculum quality and teaching. They

support staff through appropriate professional development, helping teachers develop secure subject knowledge.

Leaders prioritise and emphasise reading and mathematics well. Phonics is taught consistently and reading books are matched closely to pupils' phonics knowledge. This helps pupils practise and apply their reading skills effectively. Pupils recall key mathematical facts with confidence. Leaders have also identified appropriate priorities for improvement, including strengthening handwriting and transcription by the end of Reception. Learning across the wider curriculum is sequenced coherently from the early years onwards.

Teaching is effective across the school. Staff organise mixed-age classes well and routinely check pupils' understanding to identify what they know and can do. However, adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not consistently precise across subjects. In particular, teachers sometimes have not ensured that pupils have secured the vocabulary they need to access new learning successfully. As a result, adaptations do not consistently help pupils with SEND build knowledge and understanding over time.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders give appropriate priority to the early years. The curriculum supports children's learning effectively. Staff teach phonics well. Children begin learning to read as soon as they start Reception. Children learn to hold a pencil correctly and securely develop their early writing skills. Children build mathematical knowledge confidently. For example, they count the chairs around the snack table accurately. Consequently, children typically achieve well from their starting points.

Staff prioritise children's wellbeing and welfare. Through stories, routines and daily interactions, children learn to understand and manage their feelings. As a result, children are happy and settled. They also learn to take turns, share resources and be kind. For example, children are encouraged to help one another put away their belongings at the start of the day. Staff work closely with families and external agencies to arrange timely support for pupils with additional needs when needed.

Warm, nurturing relationships and clear routines help children settle quickly and engage in learning. The calm environment promotes purposeful activity and positive behaviour. Staff quickly identify learning gaps and adapt children's activities to reduce barriers. They effectively support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, children are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Inclusion is underpinned by leaders' detailed knowledge of individual pupils and the wider community. Leaders set ambitious expectations and use effective assessment to identify needs early. From the early years, pupils are involved in monitoring and screening processes, enabling support to be put in place quickly. Leaders are committed to removing barriers to learning for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, some adaptations lack the precision needed to support learning over time, leaving pupils reliant on staff support in some circumstances.

The school works effectively with a range of external professionals to support pupils' academic progress and wellbeing. For example, the school counsellor helps pupils express their feelings, helping them feel safe and ready to learn. The school also works closely with parents and carers to contribute to pupils' success. Regular communication keeps families informed about progress.

Pupils with SEND generally follow the same curriculum as their peers. Staff receive effective training to provide targeted support for pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable. Leaders use additional funding carefully to support disadvantaged pupils, including through enrichment activities and after-school clubs. This ensures disadvantaged pupils have the same access to opportunities to develop their talents and interests as their peers.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and governors understand the school's strengths and priorities for improvement well. They make decisions in the best interests of the school community and place pupils at the centre of their work. This includes decisions about their curriculum where all pupils learn equally and together. Leaders have improved the school's work effectively. They have established a culture of good attendance and positive behaviour. As a result, pupils attend regularly and behave well in and around the school. Leaders have further developed staff's expertise in adapting learning to meet pupils' needs.

Staff value the professional learning opportunities available to them. These help staff support pupils effectively. Staff enjoy working at the school and recognise that leaders prioritise their wellbeing. This is particularly important given staff's multiple responsibilities in school. Leaders take effective actions to manage workload and reduce unnecessary pressures on staff. Leaders also work closely with external professionals to secure additional expertise when required.

Leaders, governors and staff maintain positive relationships with parents, carers and the wider community. For example, they help and support a range of local events, including an annual duck race, that raises funds and strengthens community spirit. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work and the positive relationships between home and school such as through transparent and swift communication.

Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and that pupils remain safe. They act as critical friends and challenge leaders when necessary. This supports ongoing school improvement. Governors also support leaders' wellbeing. The co-headship arrangement provides additional capacity to sustain improvement and drive future development effectively.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school's personal development programme offers a broad, carefully considered provision that responds to pupils' needs well. Leaders adapt the programme effectively and remove barriers to learning so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, participate fully in school life. Staff know pupils well and provide effective support for pupils' wellbeing. Pupils and staff build warm, respectful and trusting

relationships. Pupils value these relationships and know that staff will listen to their concerns and act on them.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing well, as reflected in the support it provides to pupils and families. Pupils learn how to stay safe online and offline. They discuss issues such as identity theft with confidence and show an age-appropriate understanding of how to manage risk. Teachers deliver relationship education effectively, helping pupils understand healthy and respectful relationships.

Pupils enjoy a clear programme of activities that supports their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development from an early age. Pupils celebrate one another's achievements and speak of a positive sense of belonging to the school community. A wide range of clubs, trips and enrichment activities help pupils develop new interests, talents and experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils enjoy opportunities such as sporting competitions and outdoor learning which develop teamwork, resilience and problem-solving skills.

Leaders enable disadvantaged pupils to access enrichment opportunities by offering free participation in a range of activities. Pupils value the many leadership roles available and develop their communication skills and sense of responsibility. Pupils show pride in their school, care for their environment and willingly help others. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and protected characteristics. Sometimes, pupils' understanding of these important concepts are superficial. Generally, the personal development programme prepares pupils well for life beyond school and strengthens their character, confidence and wider aspirations.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this school. High attendance reflects their positive attitudes and deep sense of belonging. From the moment they join, pupils become part of a close community. They know one another well and build positive relationships across year groups through the school's buddy system. As a result, bullying and unkind behaviours are rare. Staff address any concerns quickly. Pupils treat one another with kindness and respect, including during playtimes when pupils of all ages interact positively.

Warm relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to feel safe. Pupils engage well in lessons and enjoy learning both indoors and outdoors. Most pupils achieve in line with national expectations. They talk confidently about what they have learned and use subject-specific vocabulary with confidence. Staff know pupils well and work to remove barriers to learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn alongside their peers and achieve well. However, adaptations are not as effective in helping some pupils learn as well as they could be. Children in the early years settle quickly, develop independence and learn age-appropriate writing skills. At times, this learning is not swiftly built on as they move through the school.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing and welfare effectively. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, including residential visits, museum trips, music performances and sporting events. They take on leadership responsibilities and contribute positively to school life. For example, school ambassadors raise money for local charities. Pupils also

learn about sustainability through work in the edible garden, enjoy reading in the library and value opportunities to reflect in the school's reflection garden. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff and are confident that trusted adults will help them if they have concerns. Pupils feel well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers build on pupils' writing skills established in Reception and support pupils to apply them consistently across the curriculum, raising achievement to above national average outcomes.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers receive appropriate training to strengthen their subject knowledge and adaptations to learning, so that barriers to learning are removed for all pupils, supporting them to make rapid progress.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Rev. Lisa Cornell.

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

This inspection took place from 29 to 30 September 2026.

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 both co-headteachers, senior leaders, staff, parents and pupils during the inspection. The lead inspector met with representatives of the chair of governors and members of the governing body and spoke to the local authority.

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 Rochester. Its last section 48 inspection was on 14 November 2024.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Co-headteachers : Susan Elliott and Emma Hamil

Lead inspector:
Sam Carnegie, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Alice Roberts, 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 29 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

79
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: 268

School capacity

105
Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

11.39%
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

1.27%
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

15.19%
Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	61%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	67%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	86%	74%	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	R	R	R

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	58%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	58%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	100%	73%	Above

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

‘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	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	R	R	R
2025/26 (provisional)	R	R	R
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

The Key Stage 2 data we used for this inspection has not yet been published; therefore, we have not provided it alongside this school's report card. ‘R’ in the table indicates that the data is not yet available. We will update the table when the Department for Education publishes the data for the latest academic year.

‘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
2025/26 (1 term)	3.9%	5.1%	Below
2024/25 (3 term)	4.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	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
2025/26 (1 term)	7.9%	14.4%	Below
2024/25 (3 term)	12.3%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.6%	14.6%	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.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright