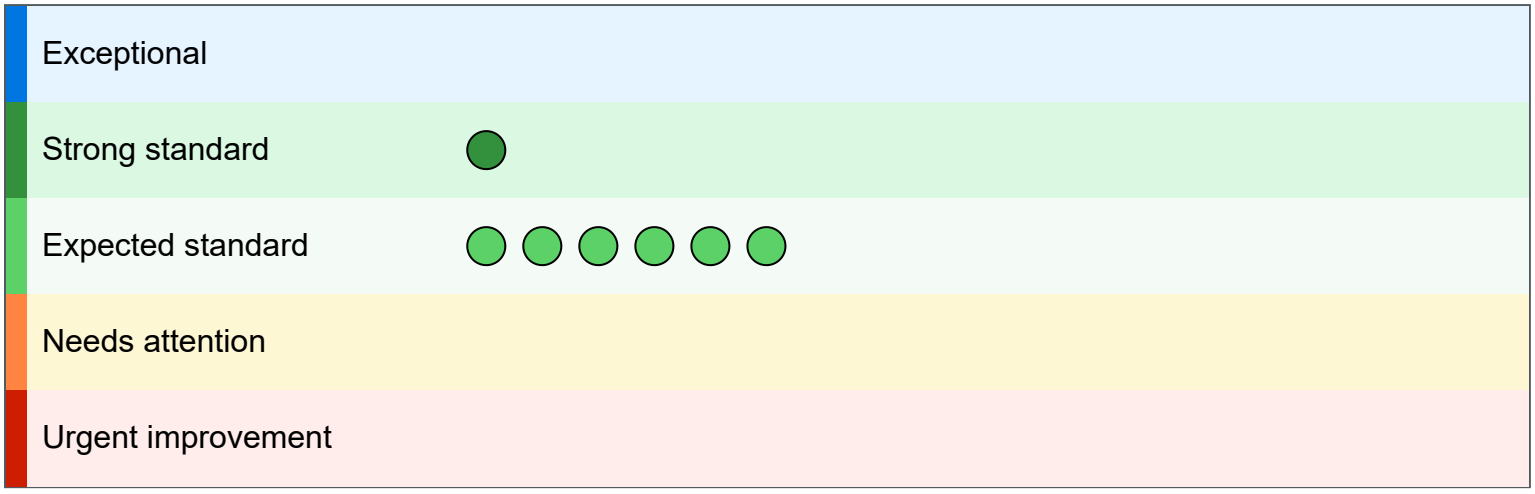
Ashwicken Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Address: East Winch Road, Ashwicken, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE32 1LY

Unique reference number (URN): 121135

Inspection report: 24 March 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

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The personal, social and health education curriculum is very well planned and delivered with precision. It has a clear, positive impact. In every year group, pupils learn about classroom rules, friendships and teamwork. They learn about their roles and responsibilities. Pupils also discover how to contribute to the whole-school community. This learning strongly aligns with the positive behaviours that exist around the school. Pupils are polite, enthusiastic learners. They demonstrate caring attitudes towards one another. Pupils take pride in their school. This is a direct result of the school's approach to personal development and how it shapes pupils' character.

Leaders have meticulously designed an approach to personal development that fits the school's context. Leaders ensure that pupils broaden their awareness of cultural diversity and life beyond the local area. Pupils remember what they have learned in detail and confidently explain key topics. These include online safety, healthy relationships, discrimination and fundamental British values. They demonstrate a highly informed understanding of how to maintain both physical and mental health. They speak thoughtfully about the importance of positive mindsets and resilience.

There is a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular opportunities on offer. These are taken up by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils benefit from activities such as performances, singing events and sports competitions, which promote inclusive participation. Staff support pupils' social development by encouraging everyone to take part.

Year 6 pupils feel ready for the next stage of their education. They appreciate the support from staff in readying them for this. Staff's oversight of pastoral and safeguarding issues helps to identify and respond to concerns quickly. The pastoral team communicates and works in partnership with families. Leaders ensure that the right support is provided at the right time.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Typically, pupils achieve well across the curriculum and overall attainment remains close to national expectations. The variation evident in published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 is largely explained by small cohorts of children and a high proportion of pupils with complex needs. Leaders closely check pupils' achievement and provide extra support for pupils when needed. There has been a similar picture for the Year 1 phonics check. However, effective and timely support enables pupils to catch up quickly by the end of key stage 1. Overall, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well from their starting points.

Pupils gain the knowledge they need for the next stage of their education. There is a positive focus on developing pupils' language and communication skills. Pupils recall key information and discuss their learning confidently. They use their secure knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics to successfully follow a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. Therefore, pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Pupils' attendance has been broadly in line with national averages for several years. There has been a decline this year and persistent absence has increased. The reasons for this are unique and largely beyond the control of leaders. Leaders' actions in response have been appropriate. They check and analyse rates of attendance for pupils effectively. Leaders quickly identify pupils who struggle to attend school regularly and adapt approaches to individual circumstances. These approaches are effective in improving attendance in most cases. Leaders work closely with families to reduce persistent absence. This includes their work with families to understand the impact of term-time holidays on learning.

Pupils’ behaviour in and around school is highly conducive to learning. There are smooth transitions between activities, which ensure learning time is not lost. Staff consistently apply expectations, and pupils live up to these. This creates a calm, orderly and positive learning environment. Pupils report that bullying and unkind behaviour are extremely rare. They trust adults to help resolve any problems they cannot manage independently. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and supportive. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes, take responsibility for their behaviour and act as role models for their peers.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is well sequenced, ambitious and adapted where required. They have made thoughtful decisions on how to teach the curriculum in mixed-age classes. Consequently, all pupils make progress from their different starting points. Staff have the necessary resources to teach all subjects effectively, including reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, staff check pupils’ progress to provide timely support so that pupils catch up if they have gaps in their learning. However, at times, teachers do not provide pupils with the precise guidance they need. They do not always identify pupils’ misconceptions swiftly and accurately enough, which results in pupils repeating mistakes.

Staff have regular opportunities to share practice and review pupils’ outcomes. This helps teaching to improve. Leaders have worked closely with external partners to enhance phonics teaching. Therefore, staff confidently teach the phonics programme. Leaders have also reviewed the teaching of early writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils develop important knowledge in these areas to move successfully through the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities successfully follow the same learning as their peers because they receive the support they need to do so. Pupils progress well through the curriculum from their starting points.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders have carefully developed the curriculum and mapped the key knowledge that children need to master across all areas of learning. They have also adjusted it this year to ensure Year 1 pupils are well supported within the mixed-age class. Staff have the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum well. They regularly check the progress children make and use this to respond to children's needs. For instance, early morning activities target fine motor development.

Teachers introduce phonics as soon as children start school. Teachers weave personal, social and emotional development throughout the curriculum. Staff support children to use the learning spaces with confidence. They encourage children to try new things and access learning throughout the curriculum. Children enter the classroom calmly because of well-established routines. This helps them to develop independence and settle quickly to tasks.

Staff adopt an open-door policy, which supports the positive relationships that exist between home and school. There is a clear focus on developing children's communication and language. The development of children's vocabulary is explicitly taught and modelled. This includes everyday language and subject-specific terms that support learning. Overall, many children leave the Reception Year well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Staff understand and know pupils well. Staff regularly review pupils' emotional and academic progress to identify any emerging needs. They also assess the impact of the support provided. Parents and carers play a valued and important role as partners in this process. Where necessary, leaders work with other professionals and external agencies. Together, they agree on the strategies and approaches needed to help pupils be successful. Leaders ensure that staff receive training to implement agreed strategies for pupils, including from external partners, such as the virtual school. Leaders make effective use of additional funding, including the pupil premium grant provided for disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities.

Leaders actively refine and develop their plans for inclusion. These improvements support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils effectively. Leaders start with the identification of pupils' strengths. Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils talk positively about their achievements. They celebrate the progress they make. Leaders clearly outline the approaches and expectations for staff to use in the classroom. This includes the use of bespoke resources for pupils and other materials to support learning. Staff generally apply these strategies well.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders know the school well and are dedicated to its further development. They demonstrate their vision through their everyday actions and decisions. Their understanding of pupils and the school's context helps them to identify areas for improvement and implement well-planned actions. They communicate these plans clearly. Leaders check regularly that their work is having the intended impact. They also look beyond the school,

drawing on the experience of other settings to refine their approaches.

Staff speak positively about the support, challenge and guidance they receive. Leaders place high importance on staff's professional learning and wellbeing. They create opportunities for staff to extend their skills and pursue areas of interest.

Leaders make decisions that keep pupils' needs at the centre, including those who are disadvantaged or who face additional barriers. They seek external expertise to support them in this. Governors contribute to this process. They bring a range of skills to help ensure that the school meets the responsibilities expected of them. This includes reviews of safeguarding arrangements and checks that funding is used to best effect. Their regular visits help them to understand the impact of leaders' actions. Parents express confidence in the school and most would recommend it to others.

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

Pupils are extremely proud of their school and are eager to talk to visitors about all the opportunities they have at Ashwicken. They study a broad curriculum, readily sharing what they know and using the key vocabulary they have acquired. Staff know pupils well and think about them when designing the content of lessons. Teachers provide appropriate support and challenge and encourage pupils to try their best. Pupils make progress from their starting points as a result of the care and support they receive.

Pupils understand the school's vision of caring for each other and caring for the world. There are opportunities for pupils to take on school leadership roles and contribute to community life. For example, they write to the parish council, build links with an important local charity and focus their fundraising to support this. The school eco council looks after the grounds, which are full of blooming hyacinths thanks to their hard work. Every child is an important and valued member of the school community. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils have the support they need to participate in all aspects of school life. They learn to identify and celebrate their strengths. As a result, they develop positive self-esteem and confidence.

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school plays a key role in fostering a conducive and positive learning environment. Pupils listen to each other, take turns and learn to persevere. They say that bullying is extremely rare. They know that the adults in school will be there to help them solve a problem they cannot solve for themselves. Pupils enjoy being in school, so most pupils attend regularly. The school works closely with parents and carers to help them understand the impact that non-attendance at school can have.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen staff expertise to ensure they consistently support all pupils to achieve the ambitions of the curriculum.

- Leaders should ensure that staff swiftly and precisely identify pupils' misconceptions so that they do not continue to make the same errors.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Dr Murree Groom.

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 school leaders, members of the governing body and the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Christian (Church of England) religious character. The last section 48 inspection was in 2025.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Sophie Dickson

Lead inspector:
Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Rob Edwards, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

103
Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

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)

11.65%
Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

6.80%
Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

16.50%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	47%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	75%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	90%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	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	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	73%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	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	40%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	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	80%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	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	90%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (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	70%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘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	40%	68%	-28 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	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	80%	80%	0 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	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	90%	78%	12 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	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	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘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 (2 term)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	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 (2 term)	13.9%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	18.6%	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.

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