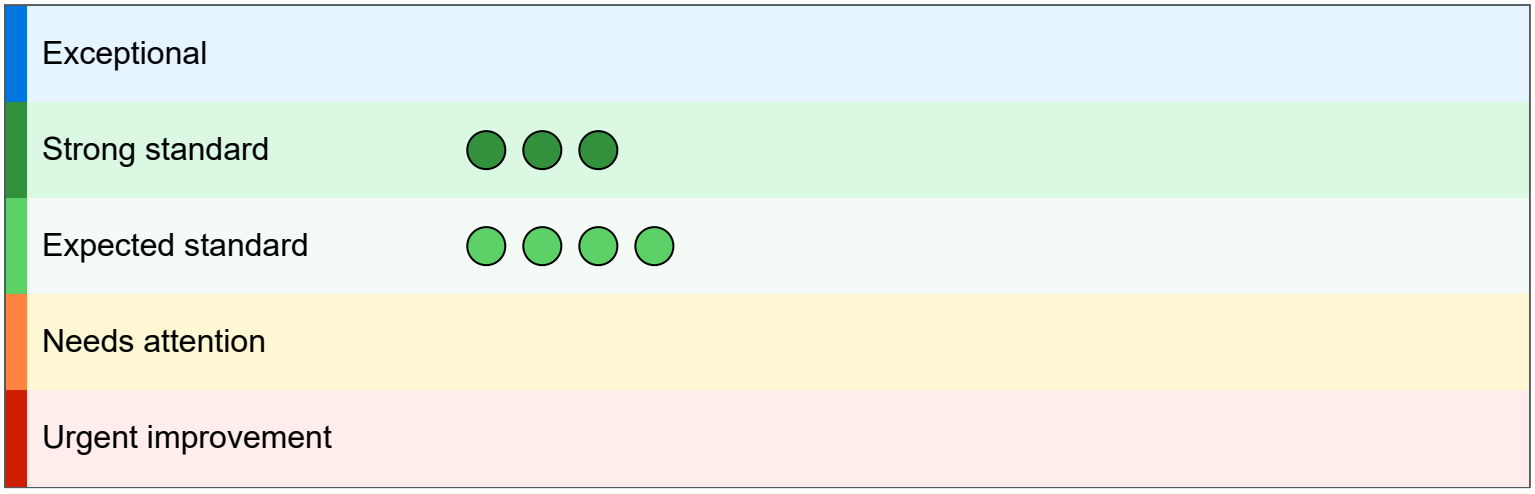
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Thornton Cleveleys

Address: Heys Street, Thornton, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4HL

Unique reference number (URN): 149265

Inspection report: 10 February 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 track attendance closely and act fast when concerns arise. They collect and analyse information often. This helps them to give targeted support to pupils who need it, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are tenacious in encouraging pupils to attend school. Attendance is high as a result. Leaders work effectively with families and external agencies to secure improvement when needed. Leaders also foster positive attendance habits through assemblies, clubs and community events, such as food bank collections. These opportunities build strong relationships with families and support regular attendance.

Pupils walk around school with pride and purpose. They greet adults politely and settle quickly to learning. This helps pupils succeed from the early years to Year 6. Breaktimes are calm and friendly. Pupils play well together. They often resolve minor disputes among themselves. Older pupils show great care for their younger peers. They enjoy spending time with them, talking with each other and organising games. Pupils feel safe from bullying, which they report rarely happens. They trust staff to quickly and effectively deal with any issues they cannot resolve themselves. Pupils with SEND receive support that helps them take part successfully and feel included in all aspects of school life.

Early years

Strong standard

Leaders have a thorough knowledge and passion for the provision in the early years. They have designed a highly effective and well-thought-out curriculum that supports progress across all areas of learning, with communication and language at its heart. Staff understand children’s starting points. They skilfully adapt teaching so that children, including disadvantaged children, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing other barriers, get off to an excellent start to their early education.

Staff interact with children with skill and purpose. They model rich vocabulary, extend children's sentences and introduce new words through play. Staff expertly and sensitively guide children, whether helping them to explain their thinking or adjust their pencil grip. Children respond with confidence. They speak clearly with staff and friends about what they are learning.

Indoor and outdoor activities give children regular opportunities to practise and secure important knowledge. Staff adeptly bring the wider world to life through stories, rhymes, songs and cultural experiences. Reading is a priority. Children love sharing books. They learn letters and sounds through expert, well-crafted teaching that helps them begin to read and write.

Children achieve highly in the early years. They are ready for their move into key stage 1. Children show curiosity and independence in learning. They develop strong personal and social skills. Staff build positive partnerships with families.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school places pupils' personal development and wellbeing at its centre. Staff create a clear, joined-up programme that nurtures pupils' confidence, resilience and independence, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils take part in regular activities that build leadership skills and problem-solving. For example, they create and run their own clubs, such as in coding and skateboarding. Older pupils eagerly guide younger ones during play. The school grounds offer rich opportunities for sports and outdoor learning, helping pupils practise teamwork and cooperation.

Leaders have put in place an appropriate personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. This helps pupils build their knowledge from the early years to Year 6. Pupils revisit themes with greater depth as they grow. The curriculum helps pupils to learn how to stay safe online and how to manage risks to their wellbeing. Older pupils discuss moral choices with maturity and draw on a secure sense of right and wrong. Staff track pupils' development closely. They provide timely support when pupils need extra help. This targeted approach strengthens pupils' confidence and sense of belonging.

Pupils develop a strong sense of spirituality. They reflect on their own beliefs and show clear respect for the values and traditions of others. They speak with confidence about their roles as faith monitors, house captains and music ambassadors. In the early years, children learn to act kindly and fairly. Across the school, pupils use appropriate language to express emotions and manage friendships with understanding.

Pupils embrace difference and challenge intolerance. They talk with assurance about equality and fundamental British values. Debates, cultural celebrations and historical enquiries deepen their understanding. A wide range of sports and trips broaden their horizons. Leaders support all pupils to participate. Through these rich experiences, pupils strengthen their character and actively contribute to the school community.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievement, including pupils who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are known to social care. Pupils build knowledge and skills securely over time. The school provides effective support for pupils who struggle to keep up with their peers, particularly those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. Pupils make steady progress from their different starting points.

Children start well in the early years. This continues into key stage 1. Pupils confidently build the phonics knowledge they need to become fluent and accurate readers by the end of key stage 1.

By the end of Year 6, pupils, including those pupils that are disadvantaged, typically achieve well in reading and mathematics. This is reflected in their results in national tests, which are similar to the national average. In writing, many pupils achieve above average in national tests. In other subjects, pupils also typically achieve well. In most cases, pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. On the whole, pupils have the knowledge that they need to move on successfully to secondary school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders show a secure understanding of curriculum quality and use this to make informed choices that strengthen teaching. The ambitious and well-ordered curriculum helps pupils gain knowledge step by step from their starting points. In early years, staff focus on communication and language. This helps children to develop the vocabulary they need for future learning. Across subjects, leaders have high expectations for every pupil. They make thoughtful adaptations so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new ideas with clarity. They use well-informed strategies and revisit prior learning to help pupils know and remember more. Pupils show secure understanding. For example, they use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and apply phonics learning with confidence when reading. Pupils who struggle, for example in their reading, are well supported to quickly catch up with their peers and to read confidently and fluently. Teachers foster positive learning behaviours which lead to pupils' high engagement. They know pupils well and design activities that build on pupils' interests. Regular checks on learning help teachers spot gaps and adapt teaching. Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum well across all subjects. However, pupils' handwriting is not as accurate or fluent as it could be. There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of handwriting and how frequently it is taught. Sometimes pupils' writing is difficult to read because letters are not formed correctly.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders ensure that staff identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. They assess pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care without delay, using external agencies when needed. For example, as soon as concerns arise, leaders refer pupils for speech and language support. Leaders tackle any barriers to learning or wellbeing through thoughtful adaptations. Staff use strategies such as visual overlays and alternative ways for pupils to record their work. This helps all pupils to follow the same curriculum equitably. Staff provide pupils with resources that support their learning and help them develop independence.

Leaders check pupils' progress closely and review the effectiveness of the support provided. They adjust support when strategies do not lead to improvement. Systems for overseeing the progress of pupils with SEND are effective and well established. However, work to design similar systems to support pupils with other barriers, including those who are

disadvantaged, have medical needs or are known to social care, is recent. While this work is improving, it is not yet refined enough to give leaders full assurance that no gaps remain.

Leaders work with teachers, parents and carers to coordinate timely support. Staff receive regular training to help them to deliver and review the quality of the support they provide. Leaders use additional funding to remove barriers for disadvantaged pupils. They work with the local authority to raise aspirations for children known to social care. These actions strengthen inclusive practice and improve outcomes for learners.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders make firm decisions in pupils' best interests. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those known to social care receive the support they need to succeed. Leaders have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and focus on purposeful improvement. They use every space, indoors and outdoors, to enrich pupils' learning. Leaders maintain a lively culture of sport, music and drama that broadens pupils' experiences. They set ambitious academic expectations and foster pupils' independence and resilience.

Leaders provide staff with a positive programme of professional learning, supported by the trust. Curriculum leaders take part in trust-wide collaboration that builds staff's expertise and consistency in teaching. Staff value the care and support they receive from leaders to manage their workload and wellbeing. They value reduced paperwork and the sense of teamwork across the school. Staff appreciate how leaders check in with them often and respond thoughtfully to wellbeing needs.

Governors and trustees have a clear commitment to the school. They challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account for statutory duties, including outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and those known to social care. Governors and trustees play an active role in shaping the school's culture and expectations for pupils' achievement.

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

Pupils arrive each morning to a warm welcome from staff. This helps pupils to have a strong sense of belonging and ensures that they feel well cared for. Older pupils support their younger peers through leadership roles, such as through the pupil chaplaincy team. They lead prayer, organise charity events and model kindness towards others. Pupils confidently follow the school's values and know how these guide their relationships. They take part in a wide range of clubs, from sports to choir. These help pupils to build friendships beyond their classes. Staff know pupils well and make sure those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or other barriers to learning take part in all areas of school life.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. Teachers build pupils' knowledge in clear steps. They provide timely and effective support for pupils who need extra help, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND. Pupils take pride in their achievements. Staff celebrate these in

assemblies and through reward systems. Across the school, pupils understand how their learning links to the wider world. This prepares them well for their next steps in education.

Pupils behave well and show respect for one another. They move calmly around the school and listen carefully during lessons. Pupils feel safe because staff act swiftly if they have any worries. They trust staff to deal with unkind behaviour, or the very rare incidents of bullying, quickly. Pupils have high levels of attendance. They contribute to their wider community through charity work and links with the local church. These experiences help pupils understand how to be a positive member of their school and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue their work to raise levels of attainment in reading and mathematics, including for disadvantaged pupils, so that these are as high as those in writing.
- Leaders should strengthen the teaching of handwriting across the school so that pupils develop their legibility, accuracy and fluency in writing.

About this inspection

This school is part of The Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic 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 (CEO), Helen O'Neill, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Ridyard.

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.

The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector spoke with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with members of the trust, including the CEO and the chair of the trustee board. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also took account of the views of pupils, parents and carers.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last section 48 inspection was in February 2025.

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Since the previous inspection, the school has became an academy. It joined the trust on 1 January 2023.

Paul Eaton: Headteacher

Lead inspector:
Sue Eastwood, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Trish Merritt, Ofsted Inspector
Rachel Pars, 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 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

200
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)

21.00%
Close to 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

1.50%
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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

10.50%
Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	60%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	73%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	80%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	89%	72%	Above
2022/23		71%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23		73%	

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		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	57%	47%	Close to average

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

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		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	71%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	71%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

‘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		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	57%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

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%	
2024/25 (revised)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	71%	78%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	71%	81%	-9 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		79%	

‘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)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.0%	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 (2 term)	13.3%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.6%	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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