

Penketh South Community Primary School

Address: Finlay Avenue, Penketh, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 2PN

Unique reference number (URN): 145710

Inspection report: 9 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ **Safeguarding standards met**

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders give a high priority to pupils' attending school regularly. They have established highly effective systems to promote regular attendance. Leaders monitor attendance closely and respond immediately to concerns if they arise. Attendance is consistently higher than national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders work very closely with pupils and families to overcome any barriers to attendance and provide timely support where needed. As a result, most pupils attend school each day and benefit fully from the opportunities that the school provides.

Leaders have established very clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and ensure that pupils receive appropriate support when needed. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. Routines are embedded so that pupils settle very quickly from the start of the new school year, including those children who attend the two-year-old provision. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. They are consistently respectful towards adults and one another. Pupils report that they feel safe in school. Leaders support staff to deal with any bullying or unkind behaviour swiftly. The very high standard of behaviour contributes to pupils' academic success and their personal development.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Leaders ensure that most pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in these subjects is typically in line with the national average. Leaders' work to improve the way that writing is taught is gaining traction. This has impacted positively on the most recent published outcomes for writing which is close to the national average.

As soon as children start in the Reception class, they begin to acquire the sounds and letters that they need to learn to read and write. Most pupils achieve well as they move through the school. However, a small number of pupils who find learning more difficult do not achieve as well as they might in some aspects of early reading and writing. They find it hard to blend sounds to read and form letters to write fluently. While most pupils achieve well across the curriculum, some pupils' recall of some subjects lacks detail. This is because pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to build securely on what they already know.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress well from their starting points. Most pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since the last inspection, leaders have refined the curriculum so that pupils learn key knowledge in a logical order across each subject. Leaders' sharp focus on teaching has ensured that the curriculum is taught consistently well. Leaders' actions to improve important areas, such as writing, has ensured that staff are well-equipped to teach these important areas of learning well. Expectations are high across school so that staff do not accept less than pupils' best. Staff generally use assessment strategies effectively in most subjects. They pinpoint the knowledge and skills that pupils may need to revisit or practise. Teachers design activities that capture pupils' interests and encourage curiosity.

Staff make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to access the curriculum alongside their peers. Teachers quickly get to know pupils. When pupils have educational health care plans, teachers use these plans effectively to inform teaching.

When pupils struggle to acquire the skills that they need to read and write fluently, the support that teachers provide is not as precise as it could be. In addition, teachers' assessment of pupils' progress does not provide enough clarity about what pupils' next steps should be. Some aspects of the curriculum beyond English and mathematics are not taught as consistently as other areas.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a welcoming and nurturing environment that gives children a positive start to their education. Children, including those in the two-year-old provision, settle quickly and learn routines that help them feel safe, secure and ready to learn. The well-designed Nursery curriculum prepares children effectively for the Reception Year. Staff place a high priority on children's wellbeing and tailor support carefully to meet individual needs.

A sense of wonder and curiosity permeates the provision. Through warm interactions, staff enrich children's vocabulary, language and thinking. Children engage deeply in purposeful play, designing and constructing vehicles in the workshop and using tools safely and confidently. In the reading area, books inspire lively conversations as children enthusiastically share stories and discuss characters with staff. Outdoor learning broadens children's experiences and encourages exploration. Children dig and investigate with enthusiasm, developing their knowledge through first-hand experiences. Children show resilience and persevere when tasks become difficult.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities acquire the important skills that they need for learning. In mathematics, children acquire the knowledge and skills they need for Year 1. Recent work to strengthen early reading and writing has improved achievement for most children. However, a small number do not secure some key reading and writing skills as fully as they could before moving on to Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders work with external agencies to identify the needs of pupils accurately. Staff ensure that pupils are well-supported in lessons with appropriate adaptations and specialist support when needed. Leaders make sure that provision is appropriate to help pupils to access learning and support pupils' wellbeing.

Leaders use additional funding to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. Additional sessions, including opportunities for reading, phonics and play therapy support pupils who need extra help.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) progress well from their starting points. Leaders make sure that they learn alongside their peers and are fully included in the wider life of the school. However, some SEND plans do not reflect the provision that pupils need precisely enough. Leaders do not involve parents and carers closely enough in shaping the support that some of these pupils receive.

Leaders support pupils who are known, or previously known, to social care well. Careful tracking ensures that staff keep a close eye on these pupils to ensure that they feel happy and are safe. Staff are especially mindful of the needs of pupils who have caring responsibilities. Leaders build relationships with families which enables support for these pupils to be especially effective.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Since the last inspection, leaders have secured important improvements to reading, curriculum design and writing. They have also strengthened the school's work in promoting positive behaviour and attendance. Leaders have identified appropriate priorities for improvement and are taking suitable action to address these areas.

Roles and responsibilities between the trust, members of the local governing body and school leaders are understood well. Trust leaders provide effective support and oversight while allowing school leaders to maintain responsibility for the school's day-to-day work. The local governors provide both support and challenge to leaders.

Leaders value staff's wellbeing so that staff feel supported, including during periods of change. Professional learning has led to improvements in key areas. As a result, staff are better equipped to deliver the school's priorities.

Leaders engage positively with parents, carers and the wider community. Parents appreciate the caring ethos of the school, the opportunities available to pupils and leaders' willingness to listen and respond.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders place high importance on the personal development of pupils. They have designed and refined a carefully crafted programme that brings together the personal social, health

and economic education programme with pastoral support and a wide range of enrichment options. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and build positive relationships with each other. They understand how to look after their physical health, know how to be a good friend and know how to seek help if they have a worry. Pupils also learn about risks to their wellbeing, including those they may encounter online and in the wider community.

The school helps pupils to develop an understanding of the world around them. Through the curriculum and wider opportunities, pupils learn about different cultures, beliefs and communities. Links with schools in France and Denmark broaden pupils' experiences and understanding of life beyond their local area. These opportunities are targeted particularly towards disadvantaged pupils. Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values by sharing their views, contributing to school life and taking on responsibilities. Roles such as school councillors and eco warriors help pupils make a positive contribution to the school community.

Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those that face disadvantage or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit fully from the opportunities available. This includes sport, music, outdoor learning, educational visits, clubs and leadership opportunities. Residential visits, careers activities and the school's Challenge Award help pupils to build confidence and independence. Community projects and work with the local care home help pupils to understand how they can contribute to society. As a result, pupils are safe, valued and well supported. Pupils are prepared for life beyond school.

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

Pupils achieve well at this happy and welcoming school. The newly established breakfast club and wraparound provision provide a nurturing place to start and end the school day. Pupils enjoy learning and speak positively about their experiences. Staff encourage pupils to do and be their best. Lessons spark pupils' curiosity for learning. They are encouraged to ask questions and develop their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff identify and address barriers to learning and wellbeing effectively. This enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to progress well from their starting points.

Pupils feel that they belong. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and positive. Staff know pupils well. This helps pupils to feel safe and included in all aspects of school life. The school's values of kindness, respect, honesty and resilience are evident in daily interactions. Pupils treat one another with consideration and show respect for differences. They enjoy taking part in wider opportunities beyond the classroom. Pupils join clubs, represent the school and take on leadership roles to contribute to decision making. Residential trips and international opportunities enable pupils to try new experiences and build lasting memories.

Pupils thrive in a safe and caring environment. Staff listen to pupils and help them if they have concerns. Pupils have very high standards of behaviour. They understand the school's expectations and meet them consistently well. If bullying does occur, it is dealt with swiftly. Highly positive relationships contribute to a very calm and purposeful atmosphere. Attendance rates are consistently above the national average. The extensive outdoor

spaces provide opportunities to play, learn and develop confidence. Pupils leave this school as confident, respectful and well-rounded young people who are ready for their next steps.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the learning plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are more precise and include greater collaboration with parents and carers to enable these pupils to progress well from their starting points.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff receive further training to teach subjects beyond English and mathematics more effectively. This includes helping pupils to explain what they have learned and make connections between new learning and what they already know.
 - Leaders should continue to refine approaches to the teaching of early reading and writing for pupils who find these aspects of learning more difficult to help pupils to develop greater fluency and accuracy.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of The Challenge 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, Andy Moorcroft, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Phil McKewan.

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

This inspection took place from 9 to 10 September 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 senior leaders during the inspection. They also spoke with members of the trust and local governor challenge board and a representative of the local authority.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has appointed a new headteacher since the last inspection.

Headteacher: Claire Lawton

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Ian Shackleton, 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 9 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

230

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: 268

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)

13.00%

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

3.04%

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: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.91%

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

Well below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	52%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	61%	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	81%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	59%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	68%	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	81%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	76%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	80%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	87%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	40%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	43%	46%	Close to average
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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	62%	Close to average
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	47%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	58%	Close to average
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	73%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average
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 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	43%	67%	-25 pp
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	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	80%	-23 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	47%	78%	-31 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	78%	-20 pp
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	73%	80%	-6 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	79%	-22 pp
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 (3 term)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.1%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	6.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.1%	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.

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



