

Samuel Barlow Primary Academy

Address: Church Road, Clipstone, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG21 9DF

Unique reference number (URN): 144611

Inspection report: 6 May 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and strategic approach to attendance. They check attendance each day and act quickly when pupils are absent. While pupils' levels of attendance are below national levels, attendance continues to improve. Leaders have successfully reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school and continue to do so. They work closely with families to build trust and reduce barriers to regular attendance. For example, regular checks and work with external agencies help families to successfully engage with support. Leaders have improved pupils' punctuality through whole-school initiatives, including through providing breakfast club, incentives and themed events.

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. Well-established routines help pupils to feel calm, safe and ready to learn. At break and lunchtimes, staff support pupils to play safely and kindly. They deal with rare incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Leaders tackle any discrimination, harassment and unkind behaviour appropriately. They have strengthened the behaviour systems. As a result, serious behaviour incidents and suspensions have reduced. A small number of pupils continue to struggle to manage their behaviour. Leaders know these pupils well and provide tailored support to ensure that learning is not disrupted.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a positive start in the early years. Staff know children well. They understand that many children begin the Nursery Year with significant barriers to learning and wellbeing, including in communication and language and self-care skills. Leaders use this knowledge to provide individual support quickly to enable children to succeed. This includes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make secure progress from their starting points. Leaders work closely with children's families to support their learning, wellbeing and regular attendance.

Leaders have thoughtfully designed indoor and outdoor areas to help children to learn well across all areas of learning. Children settle in quickly and feel secure in the calm and welcoming environment. They enjoy learning through play. Well-established routines mean that children understand the expectations of their behaviour. They grow their independence, such as by tidying up and looking after their own belongings.

Staff have warm relationships with children. They engage children in high-quality interactions, including during their play, which helps children to build their vocabulary and their listening and speaking skills. Children enjoy plentiful stories and songs. These opportunities prepare children well for their next steps in learning. In the Reception Year, staff implement the phonics programme well. Children develop their early reading and writing skills effectively, which helps them to be ready for their learning in Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders place inclusion at the centre of the school's work. Each week, leaders of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attendance and wellbeing discuss pupils who may need extra help. These regular discussions help staff to identify and assess pupils' additional needs. They act quickly to reduce any barriers that pupils may have.

Leaders follow a step-by-step approach to supporting pupils. Teachers focus first on the quality of their teaching in class before adding in extra help or additional strategies or resources where needed. Leaders check whether this support helps pupils to progress well. They make adjustments where needed. Staff receive regular training that helps them to successfully support pupils with a wide range of needs.

Leaders work well with outside agencies and local partners. They make effective use of this expertise to support pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged or are known to social care. Leaders ensure that pupils' individual learning programmes are meaningful and include the views of pupils, parents and carers. Specific learning targets link well to pupils' interests and their wider activities.

Leaders use additional funding carefully to support disadvantaged pupils with their learning and wellbeing. They check the impact of this work regularly to make sure that pupils benefit fully.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations. They are reflective and understand the school's strengths and areas to further improve. Leaders place pupils' interests at the centre of their decision-making. They have worked carefully to strengthen the school's culture, relationships and consistency. Parents and carers, staff and pupils appreciate the positive changes that have been made. Leaders have taken appropriate actions to improve teaching and how well pupils achieve, though further work is needed to ensure that these aspects of the school continue to improve.

Leaders check progress towards their development priorities carefully. They seek support, when needed, including from the trust and through engagement with external projects. Staff feel supported and valued by leaders. They are appreciative of the respectful, team-focused culture that leaders have established. Staff recognise the challenges of meeting pupils' complex needs, knowing that leaders listen and provide help when needed. Leaders manage staff's workload carefully and invest in their professional development. Coaching, trust-wide training and leadership opportunities help staff to further grow in their confidence and skills.

Local governors and the trust work together effectively. They understand their roles and ensure that they meet statutory duties, especially around safeguarding. Trustees and local governors thoroughly understand the school's context. They ask the right questions and balance effective support with robust challenge. Parents and the community feel more

engaged with the school. Leaders welcome families, communicate clearly and work hard to build trust and remove barriers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This helps pupils to feel valued and included in the full life of the school. Staff build respectful relationships with pupils, which helps pupils to feel cared for, confident and ready to learn. Leaders provide a clear and well-designed personal development programme that is complemented through regular assemblies to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Leaders keep parents well informed about relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about relationships, respect, health and wellbeing in an age-appropriate way. They understand how to stay safe, including when online and in the local area. Pupils develop a secure knowledge about risks to their safety and health that they may encounter in the future, such as 'stranger danger' and substance misuse.

The support for pupils' wellbeing is a strength. Staff know pupils well and respond quickly to concerns. They use specialised approaches, such as 'LEGO therapy', 'worry work' and regulation activities. These techniques help pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to manage their emotions and build resilience. Regular wellbeing sessions support these pupils to settle and focus after breaks so they are ready to learn.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs, trips and enrichment activities that build their confidence, independence and team work skills. These include sports, creative arts and residential visits. Leaders check that all pupils benefit from these wider opportunities.

Pupils show kindness and respect towards others. They accept the many differences that exist between themselves and others. Pupils behave in ways that reflect fundamental British values, although some find it difficult to explain some of these values. Pupils are proud of their leadership roles, such as being school councillors and 'junior leaders'. They enjoy fundraising activities and contributing to decisions about school. Leaders are refining ways to further develop pupils' responsibilities.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. While pupils' achievement is improving, particularly in early reading and phonics, their attainment by the time they leave school remains too low. Across the school, too many pupils do not secure important knowledge, such as in spelling, handwriting and grammar. This slows their progress across the curriculum and hinders their preparedness for the next steps in their education.

Many pupils join the school with significant barriers to their learning. Leaders provide individual support to develop their confidence, independence and communication skills. This helps to reduce gaps in these pupils' knowledge and understanding. This is not consistently

reflected in pupils' written work. Some pupils show improved writing knowledge and skills, for example they edit and improve their written work well. However, other pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, make variable progress from low starting points.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Leaders are taking action through training and monitoring but some of this work has not yet had time to impact. In some lessons, learning does not always build on what pupils already know and teachers do not always check pupils' understanding. This means that, sometimes, poor handwriting, spelling and punctuation go unchecked. This limits pupils' progress.

Leaders have planned a well-sequenced curriculum. They have high expectations and rightly prioritise reading, writing and mathematics. In the most effective lessons, teachers use practical resources and clear support to help pupils catch up, especially in writing and mathematics. When teachers identify misconceptions and address gaps in knowledge and skills, pupils understand their learning and apply it confidently.

Early reading is prioritised. Most staff follow the synthetic phonics programme well. One-to-one reading helps pupils sound out words, read more fluently and develop their understanding of what they have read. As a result, most pupils enjoy reading and are growing in confidence. However, a small number of staff do not always model sounds accurately. This can confuse pupils. Leaders provide coaching for staff, but practice is not yet consistent.

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

Pupils feel safe, happy and cared for at this school. The start of the day is calm and organised, which helps pupils to come into school confidently each morning. Staff greet them warmly and help them to settle quickly. Pupils trust staff to listen and help them should they have any worries.

Pupils generally attend school regularly. They appreciate the community feeling of the school, where people care about each other. Pupils enjoy their learning and speak positively about school. Many pupils talk with excitement about the subjects that they enjoy, such as physical education, art and design, English and computing. Staff reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may have. However, staff do not consistently help all pupils to learn successfully. This means that too many pupils do not secure the important knowledge and skills that they need to progress as well as they should.

Pupils typically behave well. They follow clear routines and understand what staff expect of them. Most lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils show kindness towards each other and help their classmates if they become upset. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and fairly. At break and lunchtimes, pupils play happily together. They choose from a range of activities, including active games and quieter play. Some pupils occasionally find

it difficult to manage their own feelings. Staff give these pupils highly effective support, so that they can quickly return to their learning.

Pupils access a wide range of clubs, trips and special events. These experiences help them build confidence, teamwork and independence. Older pupils take on additional responsibilities and help their younger peers, when they need support. Children in the early years feel especially secure and happy. Adults know them well and care for them closely, which helps children to feel confident as they begin school. Children enjoy learning through play in a calm and welcoming space.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently identify and swiftly address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge.
 - Leaders should ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, make suitable progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of education.
 - Leaders should ensure that their attendance strategy continues to reduce levels of persistent absence, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Diverse Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Cotton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Schwarz. An executive principal, Gareth Letton, also oversees this school.

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 the executive principal, principal, other leaders and staff, pupils and parents. They also spoke with representatives of the trust and the local academy committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new principal has been appointed.

Principal: Jon Chapman

Lead inspector:

Luella Dhoore, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Karen Slack, Ofsted Inspector

Sylvie Newman, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

263

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

354

Close to 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)

39.39%

Above 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

6.08%

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

20.53%

Above 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	35%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	31%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	32%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	41%	60%	Below

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	45%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	41%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	44%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	57%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	44%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	60%	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	48%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	73%	Below

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	15%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	7%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	25%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	18%	44%	Below

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	28%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	14%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35%	60%	Below

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	38%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	14%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53%	58%	Close to average

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	26%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	14%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	35%	59%	Below

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	15%	68%	-52 pp
2024/25 (final)	7%	69%	-62 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	67%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	18%	66%	-49 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	28%	80%	-51 pp
2024/25 (final)	14%	81%	-67 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	80%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	35%	78%	-43 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	38%	78%	-39 pp
2024/25 (final)	14%	78%	-64 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	53%	77%	-24 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	26%	80%	-54 pp
2024/25 (final)	14%	81%	-66 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	79%	-54 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	35%	79%	-44 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.2%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	9.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	9.5%	5.9%	Above

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)	15.2%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	24.3%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	29.5%	16.2%	Above

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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