

English Martyrs' Catholic Voluntary Academy

Address: Willow Crescent, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6EH

Unique reference number (URN): 139611

Inspection report: 20 January 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 ●

Attendance shows the high-quality work of the school. Overall, attendance is consistently high. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Few pupils have regular absence. Leaders act quickly when pupils are absent. Staff contact families and offer help where needed. Leaders track attendance carefully and work closely with governors and the trust. Pastoral support helps pupils with additional needs or difficult circumstances to attend more regularly. As a result, attendance improves over time for vulnerable pupils and those facing barriers.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils learn in a calm, orderly and respectful environment. Classrooms are settled, and routines are well established. Pupils behave well in lessons and during all unstructured times. They are polite, focused and consistently ready to learn. Pupils show a real dedication to their learning. They are well prepared for secondary school. Bullying is rare. Pupils trust staff to deal with any concerns quickly and fairly. Leaders and staff apply behaviour policies consistently. They make adaptations for pupils with SEND when needed. Strong relationships and shared values help pupils feel cared for and supported.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school is highly successful in promoting pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Pupils feel safe, valued and cared for. Strong relationships and shared values shape everyday school life. The school's Catholic identity is visible and meaningful to pupils. They are proud to belong to groups such as the 'Mini Vinnies' and 'Chaplaincy Team'. This helps them to reflect on different beliefs, understand right and wrong, and show care for others.

The personal development programme is extensive and well planned. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that build confidence, resilience and independence. All pupils take part in regular outdoor learning. They also enjoy enrichment such as 'STEM days', enterprise activities and regular community events. Pupils value representing the school in sport and competitions. Leaders carefully track and target participation. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils, young carers and other vulnerable groups access and benefit fully from the same opportunities as their peers. Pupils' knowledge of personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education is detailed and secure. They speak confidently about healthy relationships, equality, online and offline safety and different forms of abuse. They can explain how to keep themselves safe and know who to talk to if they are worried. Learning is revisited over time. This helps pupils remember it and apply it to real life.

Pupils show a rich knowledge of fundamental British values. They understand democracy, respect, tolerance and fairness. They practise these values through voting, pupil leadership and community involvement. Pupils show inclusive attitudes and respect differences. They say, 'The school is like a jigsaw. Everyone is different, but we fit together perfectly.' Pastoral support is very effective. Pupils benefit from emotional support, such as access to nurture

spaces. They leave the school confident, respectful and extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils achieve well. Published results in national tests and assessments show positive performance in key stage 2, especially in mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Many pupils attain highly. This reflects generally effective teaching. Pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils do well. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities mostly make suitable progress, supported by targeted care.

Pupils build secure knowledge over time. For example, in science, pupils explain their ideas clearly using subject vocabulary. Older pupils produce high-quality extended writing across the curriculum. They are well prepared for secondary school. However, some younger pupils do not secure the important knowledge and skills they need as quickly as they could. Leaders know this is a priority.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. This is typically successful for disadvantaged pupils and those who face other barriers to learning or their wellbeing. Leaders make thoughtful decisions to improve teaching. The curriculum is well sequenced. Teachers know what pupils should learn and when. Clear curriculum thinking ensures that content builds progressively. This is from the early years through to key stage 2. Leaders make sure that the full curriculum is covered, including in mixed-age classes. Mostly, learning builds on pupils' prior knowledge.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use clear explanations and accurate vocabulary. Teachers often revisit earlier learning to help pupils remember more over time. Vocabulary is developed across subjects through talk, reading and writing. Leaders have introduced new approaches to strengthen important learning, particularly handwriting and transcription. These approaches are partly embedded. However, at times, the school does not address incorrect letter formation or errors in sentence construction quickly enough. This means some misconceptions persist longer than they should. Staff know pupils well and often adapt teaching effectively. Staff use a range of resources, including high-quality adult support, so pupils can access the curriculum. This generally helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other additional needs build their independence. On occasion, though, support for these pupils is not as well adapted as it could be. In these cases, this hinders their learning.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children in the early years make a secure and positive start to their education. Leaders understand the needs of children well and adapt learning when required. Staffing is well organised. The curriculum places a clear focus on communication and language. It helps children to develop confidence in speaking, listening and sharing ideas. The indoor and outdoor environments are well organised. This encourages children to play, explore and talk. Staff support children's learning successfully by asking questions and introducing new vocabulary. For example, making bird feeders outdoors helps children explain their ideas and learn new words.

Phonics teaching is high quality and consistent. Staff clearly model sounds and support children's pencil grip. Children apply their phonics knowledge during well-structured writing activities. They build on the stories they hear.

Children develop independence, confidence and physical skills over time. Outdoor learning supports cooperation, safe risk-taking and positive behaviour. Children are generally prepared for their move into Year 1. However, opportunities for children to write independently across the provision are not as regular as they could be. Early errors sometimes do not get the prompt response required. This, on occasion, hampers children's foundations for reading and writing.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This school is welcoming and inclusive. Staff know pupils well and treat them with care and respect. Leaders spot pupils' needs early. They put support in place quickly for pupils who are vulnerable or face other barriers, such as young carers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) generally get the help they need. Staff adapt learning carefully so these pupils can take part in lessons alongside their peers. Leaders monitor support regularly. On occasion, checks are not as sharp as they might be. Where this happens, support does not always match pupils' changing needs. This includes pupils with SEND. Typically, though, these pupils make suitable progress over time.

The school uses pupil premium funding well. Leaders remove barriers by helping pupils access a range of clubs, music opportunities and enrichment activities. Pastoral support is wide-ranging. The 'emotional literacy support room' and 'The Den' provide safe, calm spaces where pupils learn to manage emotions and prepare for learning. Staff use personalised strategies to help pupils settle and succeed. Leaders work closely with families and a range of external professionals. This helps shape the quality of support for pupils. Provision for young carers is developing. Leaders identify pupils who may need further support to develop confidence and aspirations.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leadership and governance are proactive, strategic and values-driven. Leaders understand the school well. They take decisive action to ensure that the school offers all pupils the best education possible. Leaders recognise what works well, such as the nurture provision. They act in the best interests of pupils. Leaders prioritise inclusion, safeguarding and behaviour.

Staff agree that pupils are safe, behaviour is managed consistently and bullying is dealt with quickly. Leaders respond swiftly when pupils fall behind. Leaders ensure that there is strong support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

Staff feel valued, supported and listened to. Leaders are visible and approachable. They are mindful of staff's workload and value staff's suggestions for improvement. Leaders provide training, guidance and emotional support where necessary. They check in with staff regularly. Professional development of staff is purposeful. Staff value the opportunity to network with other professionals across the trust. Staff training is tailored to ensure that the school meets pupils' academic and pastoral needs. As a result, staff morale is high.

Governors understand the school's context. They meet statutory duties securely. Governors provide effective challenge and support. They work closely with leaders to oversee priorities. Governors ensure that leaders manage resources well. Trust leaders strengthen accountability, curriculum quality and leadership capacity. Parents and carers are largely positive about the provision. Most say their children are happy, safe and well supported. Parents praise how the school communicates with them. While a small number of parental concerns exist, leaders are aware of these and are proactive in tackling any issues raised.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They thrive in a caring and inclusive community. Pupils feel safe, happy and cared for. They say there is an adult they can talk to if they have any worries. They trust staff to listen and act quickly. This helps pupils feel secure and confident during the school day.

Behaviour is exemplary. Lessons are calm and settled. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. They understand the school's rules and follow them. Everyone lives out the school's 'virtues'. Bullying is rare. Pupils appreciate how staff deal with any friendship issues quickly and fairly. Attendance is high because pupils want to be at school.

Pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to their learning. Learning is interesting and fun. Teachers help pupils remember what they have learned by revisiting key ideas. Reading is valued and shared across the school. Older pupils enjoy writing at length in subjects such as science, history and religious education. Pupils take pride in the work they produce and are keen to do their best. As a result, they achieve well. They make good progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, as are disadvantaged pupils and those who join the school partway through the year. These pupils can take part and succeed alongside their peers. This is because staff adapt learning and provide extra help.

There is a strong sense of belonging. The school is welcoming and respectful. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities. This includes opportunities to represent their school competitively, learn a musical instrument and take on a leadership role. These help pupils build confidence. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen independent writing opportunities across the early years curriculum so that expectations are consistently ambitious and children build secure writing foundations for Year 1.
 - Leaders should ensure that newly introduced approaches to handwriting and transcription are consistently embedded, with subject leaders rigorously monitoring teaching and pupils' progress to secure even stronger early foundations.
 - Leaders should strengthen the matching of activities and adaptations so that pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are consistently challenged and supported to access learning independently.
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About this inspection

This school is part of St Thomas Aquinas 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), Neil Lockyer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Noon.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, trustees and local governors, including the chair of the trust board and CEO.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses one alternative provision.

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character. The school's last Diocesan Canonical section 48 inspection took place in March 2024.

Headteacher : Joanna Rutledge

Lead inspector:

Luella Dhoore, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Elizabeth Mace, Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Evans, 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 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

151

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

150

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)

8.61%

Well 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

1.99%

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

19.87%

Above 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).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty, SLCN - Speech, language and Communication, PD - Physical Disability, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	76%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	77%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	72%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	87%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	84%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	95%	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	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	71%	Above

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	93%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	95%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	90%	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	56%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	67%	62%	Close to average
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	56%	59%	Close to average
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	56%	60%	Close to average
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	56%	68%	-12 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	67%	80%	-13 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	56%	78%	-22 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
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	56%	80%	-24 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	3.8%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.4%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.2%	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)	5.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	2.2%	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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