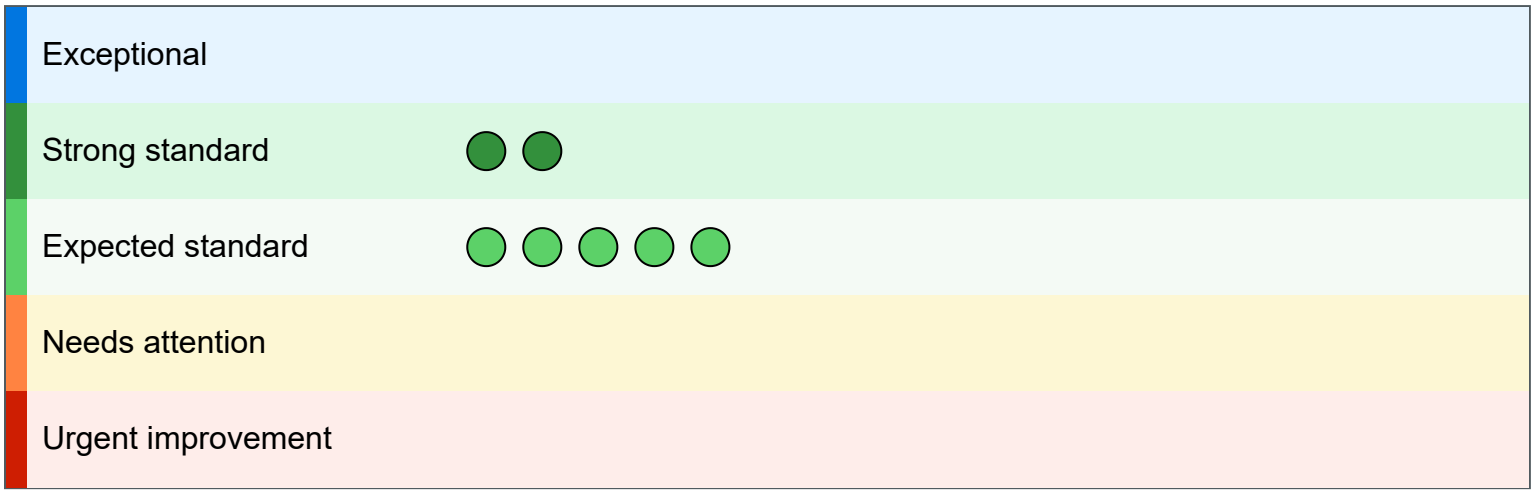
Whirley Primary School

Address: Whirley Road, Broken Cross, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 3JL

Unique reference number (URN): 140598

Inspection report: 23 June 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

Early years

Strong standard

Leaders are relentless in their high expectations across the early years. This ensures that children get off to the very best start when they join the school in the Reception Year. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that develops children's core knowledge securely in reading, writing and number. Children with barriers to learning, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported well to achieve and thrive. For example, children develop an accurate and effective pencil grip, which helps them to write fluently by the end of the Reception Year. The careful teaching of the phonics programme means that children gain a secure understanding of the sounds that letters represent. By the end of the early years, children are incredibly well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1.

Staff place a high priority on developing children's language and vocabulary. For example, weekly 'welly walks' develop children's curiosity and interest in the outdoors. Children are keen to discuss all the minibeasts they discover on their outdoor adventures. Teaching is focused and aimed at extending children's communication skills.

Parents and carers appreciate how well staff know and care about children's learning and development. Year 6 buddies create lasting bonds. Children build trusting friendships with their buddies throughout the Reception Year. This helps children to settle quickly and feel part of the wider school community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders are unwavering in their commitment to fostering the personal development of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils embody the school's values. They know how these values apply to everyone in the school community and how they help them to make the right choices. Pupils are respectful of others, regardless of their backgrounds. The curriculum reflects diversity through books, artists and religious festivals. Consequently, pupils develop a secure understanding of the differences between people in their school and in society. Pupils have a detailed understanding of the fundamental British values. This equips them well for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have meticulously designed the 'Whirley Dukes' enrichment programme. This programme equips pupils with important life skills, builds their self-confidence and develops their understanding of the world. For example, the safety strand prepares children in the early years to keep themselves safe by memorising their home address and phone number. Trips and visits contribute to broadening pupils' horizons. Opportunities to visit Bridgewater Hall, local churches, castles and forests take learning beyond the classroom. The 3 residential trips in Years 2, 4 and 6 gradually build pupils' independence and resilience. Parents and carers value the programme of residentials in helping pupils to step beyond their comfort zones. By the time they leave the school, pupils' participation in these activities helps them to try new challenges and creates lasting memories. This helps to make their time at school unforgettable.

The personal, social, health and economic education programme teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe online and in daily life. Pupils learn about healthy and unhealthy relationships. They know the importance of saying ‘no’ and speak confidently about the role of trusted adults. Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. This helps to reduce barriers to pupils’ mental health and wellbeing. Pupils hold a wide range of leadership roles, such as being ambassadors for different parts of school life. They know that their voices make a difference. This prepares them well to be agents of change within school and their local community.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Published data shows that pupils’ attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been close to or above the national average over the past 3 years. They are well prepared for their next stage in education. Pupils excel in reading by the end of key stage 2. This success builds on the secure foundations they establish in the early years and key stage 1. Pupils also write and communicate well. They use number confidently to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems.

Over time, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), build knowledge securely and achieve well from their starting points. They make links to their prior learning, and they use subject-specific vocabulary with accuracy. However, at times, a few pupils with SEND find it difficult to build their knowledge securely, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics, because the work they receive is not consistently matched to their needs.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise and maintain clear oversight of pupils’ attendance. Pupils are keen to attend school and take part in wider opportunities beyond the classroom. Leaders work closely with parents and carers. They draw on specialist support, including from the local authority, to reduce barriers to attendance. This support is timely and well matched to families’ needs. As a result, attendance is consistently above the national average for all pupils.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils’ behaviour, underpinned by the ‘Whirley rules’. On the whole, pupils strive to meet these expectations. In the early years, staff establish routines quickly. Children listen carefully, play well together and learn to share. This secure start continues across the school. Pupils are polite, caring and well mannered. They enjoy learning and they strive to do their best, whether in lessons or taking part in activities beyond the classroom.

Pupils are typically kind and caring towards each other. Leaders deal with any rare incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. Pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive sensitive

support. Staff help pupils to develop strategies to manage their behaviour so that they can make the most of their learning time. This helps them to succeed.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. Leaders carefully consider the design of the curriculum and order it accordingly across the school. They ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum as intended. Staff design learning that builds securely on what pupils already know and can do. They check pupils' knowledge carefully and routinely adapt their teaching in response.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of essential knowledge. From the start, children in the early years develop communication, language and an understanding of number so that they can read, write and calculate. Reading, including the teaching of phonics, has a high priority and is taught well across all year groups. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive targeted support to keep up with the curriculum.

Leaders use checks on teaching to inform improvement. They have recently sharpened how well teaching meets pupils' needs, particularly for those with SEND. Even so, at times, some teachers do not closely match work to these pupils' stage of learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders place a high priority on inclusion across the school. Most recently, this has been a key priority for both the trust and school leaders. They have refined and further strengthened the approach to identifying and assessing barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing. There is a clear and commonly understood approach to identifying pupils' needs at the earliest opportunity. As most children join the school in the Reception Year, staff focus on knowing children's needs from the start of the early years.

Leaders work extensively with other agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that barriers are reduced. When needed, this includes specialist advice from speech and language therapists, occupational health and educational psychologists to ensure the right support is given at the appropriate time. Generally, the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive reduces barriers to their learning. Leaders work closely with staff, as well as parents and carers, to review and adapt strategies in the best interests of pupils. As a result, pupils progress well in learning from their various starting points.

Leaders make sure that their strategy for using extra funding to enhance the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is successful. They ensure these pupils are involved in all that the school has to offer.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders aim for every pupil to get off to a flying start to their educational journey. They place this ambition at the centre of all their decision-making. This ensures that decisions are made with pupils' best interests at heart. Leaders are reflective and committed to improving pupils'

experiences, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. They respond well to emerging community needs and work with other organisations to support pupils and their families.

Leaders benefit from support and challenge from the trust. An extensive programme of professional development ensures that staff have the knowledge and expertise to succeed in their roles. ‘Subject experts’ contribute beyond the school and across the Halliard Trust. Staff appreciate these opportunities and feel valued by trust leaders. School leaders consider staff's workload carefully and introduce change in a measured way. For example, recent refinements to the behaviour policy involved all staff. This ensured that all staff were able to share their views. Leaders build secure and trusting relationships with parents and carers, who typically describe the school as a special place.

Trustees, including members of the local governing body, are committed to the school and its community. They know the school well and ensure that statutory duties are met. Link governors check the impact of leaders’ work. Consequently, governors have a clear oversight of the strengths of the school and the areas that are being refined further.

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

This is a school where every pupil is valued, known and empowered to succeed. Relationships between staff, pupils, parents and carers underpin leaders' work. There is a deep sense of community. Pupils are proud of their school. They learn and play together harmoniously. On the rare occasion when bullying occurs, leaders deal with it swiftly and effectively. Pupils speak positively about their school. They appreciate the care and support they receive. Attendance rates are high, and pupils are keen to attend each day. Pupils feel safe. They trust staff and are confident to seek support when needed.

Pupils at Whirley love learning. Classrooms are purposeful and engaging. Pupils achieve well and develop socially and emotionally. As a result, they are well prepared for their next stage of education. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff understand pupils’ needs well and provide appropriate support to help them progress through the curriculum. Pupils leave the school holding high aspirations for their future.

Learning extends beyond the classroom. Pupils know the importance of staying healthy, both physically and mentally. Initiatives such as ‘walk and wheel to school’ and the ‘daily dash’ help them to understand the benefits of exercise. Pupils contribute positively to the community. For example, older pupils worked with the Brimstone project to plant trees and wildflowers. The eco committee has created a pond and wildlife area, which supports learning about habitats through activities such as pond dipping. Pupils benefit from a wide range of educational visits. These include trips to forests, zoos, castles and observatories. Experiences such as these enrich the curriculum and bring learning to life.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers match work more consistently for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to their stage of learning, so that these pupils achieve as well as they should across the curriculum.

About this inspection

The school is part of Halliard multi academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer (CEO), Helen Gorst, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mike Gorton.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff during the inspection. The lead inspector met with the interim CEO, the chair of trustees and members of the local governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

The school has undergone significant leadership changes since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in 2025.

Headteacher: Karen Whalley

Lead inspector:
Elliot Costas-Walker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Gaynor Rennie, Ofsted Inspector
Katherine Muncaster, 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 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

213
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)

5.16%
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

3.76%
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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.39%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	66%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	65%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	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	89%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	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	78%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	77%	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	86%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
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		62%	

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	
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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
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)	3.4%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.5%	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)	3.8%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.3%	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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