St. John's CE Primary School & Nursery

Self-evaluation Form (SEF) summary

School context

The context of our school
St John's Church of England Primary School & Nursery is a large, voluntary controlled Church of England primary school situated in the market town of Belper, within the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. The school serves children aged 3 to 11 and includes both a nursery and reception provision up to and including Year 6. The school has approximately 388 children on roll and is one of the larger primary schools within Derbyshire. The school is organised across Nursery (EYFS1), Reception (EYFS2), Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, including mixed-age Year 3/4 classes introduced in September 2025 in response to financial pressures and changing budget challenges. The school also benefits from extensive grounds, including a large playground, playing field, a recently developed adventure climbing and play area known as the *Bark Area*, and a woodland space used for Forest School activities in the Early Years. **School Cohort and Community** The majority of children live within Belper and the surrounding villages. Belper is generally characterised by lower-than-average levels of deprivation, with the school's local deprivation index below the national average. As a result, many children enter school with experiences and opportunities that support their readiness for learning. However, as with many schools, there remains a cohort of children who face barriers to achievement, including those eligible for pupil premium funding and those with identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The cultural background of children is predominantly White British, reflecting the demographics of the local community, although the school welcomes families from a range of cultural, ethnic and faith backgrounds. As a Church of England school, Christian values underpin school life, whilst promoting inclusivity, respect and understanding for all members of the community. Children are encouraged to develop an appreciation of diversity and prepare for life in modern Britain through a curriculum that reflects British values and promotes equality and inclusion.

SEND, Pupil Premium and Free School Meals

The school has a significant commitment to inclusive practice and supporting vulnerable learners. A proportion of children have identified SEND needs, ranging from speech and language difficulties and specific learning needs to more complex social, emotional and mental health needs. The school's inclusive ethos ensures that children with SEND are fully integrated within mainstream classrooms and supported through targeted interventions, specialist provision and collaborative work with external agencies.

Similarly, the school receives pupil premium funding to support eligible children, including those who are or have been eligible for free school meals (FSM), looked-after children and service children. While overall levels of disadvantage are lower than national averages due to the local context, leaders remain committed to ensuring that children eligible for pupil premium funding are able to access the full curriculum and wider opportunities available within school.

Early Years Provision

A particular strength of St John's is its extensive Early Years provision. The school operates:

- One nursery class (EYFS1) catering for children aged 3–4, offering a range of attendance patterns from part-time placements to the full 30-hour entitlement.
- Two Reception classes (EYFS2) providing education for children in the final year of the Early Years Foundation Stage before Key Stage 1.

The Early Years environment benefits from dedicated buildings, outdoor learning spaces and woodland experiences, enabling children to learn through exploration, play and carefully planned adult-led activities.

Premises and Facilities

The main school building dates from the early 1970s and has been adapted and expanded over time to accommodate increasing pupil numbers. Significant developments include:

- The completion of three new classrooms and office accommodation in December 2022 through the conversion of the final open-plan learning space.
- A dedicated Nursery building opened in 2017.
- A dedicated Reception building opened in 2019.
- Five external classroom blocks across the school site.

These developments have enabled the school to maintain high-quality learning environments while continuing to grow and evolve to meet the needs of its community.

Wraparound Care and Wider Opportunities

St John's recognises the importance of supporting working families and provides a range of opportunities beyond the school day. This includes before- and after-school provision and a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs designed to enrich children's experiences and develop their interests and talents.

Opportunities typically include sporting activities, music, creative arts, curriculum enrichment, Forest School experiences and participation in community and church events. The school's extensive grounds and outdoor facilities enable a broad range of physical activity and outdoor learning opportunities.

In addition, the school works closely with families, the local church, community organisations and external agencies to provide wider support and opportunities for children. The school places significant emphasis on wellbeing, personal development and developing children as confident, resilient and responsible members of the community.

Changes over time

Like many schools nationally, St John's has adapted its organisation and provision in response to changing educational and financial circumstances.

Notable recent developments include:

- **September 2026:** Mrs Mieke Carvell becomes headteacher, after being Deputy headteacher for 12 years, and a member of the MLT begins as Deputy Headteacher (Mrs Karen Heer).
- **September 2026:** Changes to responsibilities within the MLT and SLT to ensure stability.
- **September 2025**: Introduction of mixed-age Year 3/4 classes in response to financial pressures. School leaders and governors carefully managed this transition to minimise disruption for children, staff and families.
- **September 2025**: Revision of PPA and leadership cover arrangements, moving away from qualified teachers and HLTAs delivering all cover. The school now benefits from 10 weekly PE lessons delivered by a qualified external sports coach.
- **Autumn 2025**: Migration from the Integris Management Information System to Arbor, in line with local authority requirements as support for Integris ceased.
- **January 2024**: Opening of the new Bark Area adventure play space.

Overall, St John's continues to evolve whilst maintaining its strong community focus, Christian ethos and commitment to providing high-quality education and care for all children.

Graded evaluation areas

Safeguarding

Grading	Met ☒	Not met ☐

Comments

Safeguarding at St John's is effective. The school has established a strong culture of vigilance, where safeguarding is understood to be everyone's responsibility. Leaders have created an environment in which children's welfare is paramount, concerns are acted upon promptly and appropriately, and staff are confident in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities. Systems and procedures are well established, regularly reviewed and understood by the whole school community. As a result, children are safe and feel safe, and safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Leadership, Culture and Strategic Oversight

Safeguarding is given a high profile across the school and is led effectively by the Deputy Headteacher, who serves as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by the Headteacher as Deputy DSL. Leaders ensure that safeguarding remains a standing priority through regular training, updates and monitoring.

Staff and governors receive annual safeguarding training at the start of each academic year, including updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Staff confirm that they have read and understood Part One of the guidance and receive ongoing safeguarding updates throughout the year. Leaders foster an open and reflective culture in which professional curiosity is encouraged and safeguarding discussions are routine.

Governance arrangements are strong. Governors receive detailed safeguarding reports at each full governing body meeting, while the safeguarding link governor undertakes termly monitoring visits with the DSL to review systems, records and emerging themes. Leaders regularly evaluate safeguarding practice through annual audits, using external frameworks such as the NSPCC safeguarding audit tool to identify strengths and areas for further improvement.

Systems, Procedures and Compliance

Safeguarding systems are robust, well organised and understood by staff. The school uses MyConcern to record and monitor safeguarding concerns, enabling concerns to be logged securely and acted upon promptly. Staff have access to safeguarding policies and guidance through both electronic and hard-copy formats, ensuring information is readily available whenever required.

New staff receive comprehensive safeguarding induction training, while supply staff are provided with concise guidance outlining key procedures and reporting arrangements. Leaders also ensure that safeguarding information about children is effectively shared during transition processes, enabling staff to understand and respond to vulnerabilities from the outset.

Safer recruitment procedures are securely embedded. Recruitment processes comply with statutory expectations, safeguarding checks are completed appropriately, and the Single Central Record is maintained accurately and monitored regularly by leaders and governors.

Staff Practice and Professional Development

Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and are vigilant in identifying potential concerns. They recognise the signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and wider safeguarding risks and know how to report concerns appropriately.

Leaders provide regular safeguarding updates and use local and national safeguarding learning to inform staff development. Staff report that safeguarding leaders are approachable, knowledgeable and responsive, and that they feel confident seeking support when required. This culture of openness contributes significantly to the effectiveness of safeguarding practice across the school.

Multi-Agency Working

The school works effectively with external agencies to support vulnerable children and families. Strong partnerships exist with Children'ss Services, Early Help teams, Compass Changing Lives, The Elm Foundation and other professional services.

Where children are subject to additional support plans, staff actively contribute to meetings, share relevant information and ensure agreed actions are implemented. This collaborative approach helps ensure that children receive timely intervention and coordinated support when needed.

Curriculum Impact and Preventative Education

Safeguarding is embedded within the curriculum and contributes strongly to children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Through personal, social and health education, computing, collective worship and wider pastoral provision, children learn about:

- Online safety and digital citizenship
- Healthy relationships and respectful behaviour
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Bullying and child-on-child abuse
- Personal safety and seeking help from trusted adults

External agencies further enhance this provision through assemblies, workshops and targeted interventions. Preventative safeguarding education is reinforced by the school's Christian values, which promote respect, kindness, dignity and positive relationships.

Pupil leadership groups, including the iVengers and Wellbeing Warriors, actively contribute to the school's safeguarding culture by promoting safety messages and supporting their peers.

Pupil Wellbeing and Outcomes

The school's commitment to safeguarding has a positive impact on pupil wellbeing. Surveys indicate that children feel happy and safe at school, and leaders use this feedback to inform ongoing improvements.

A wide range of pastoral support is available, including the work of the Welfare Assistant, Positive Play interventions and the Enchanted Room. These provisions support children's emotional wellbeing, resilience and readiness to learn.

The school demonstrates a proactive approach to identifying barriers to learning and providing support at an early stage. As a result, vulnerable children are well supported, and children know who to approach if they have worries or concerns.

Child-on-Child Abuse and Behaviour

Leaders fulfil their statutory duties regarding child-on-child abuse. Clear procedures are in place for identifying, recording and responding to incidents involving bullying, harassment, harmful behaviour and discriminatory incidents. Bullying and racist incidents are monitored and reported to governors, allowing patterns and trends to be reviewed effectively.

The school's preventative approach, alongside its strong culture of respect and inclusion, helps minimise incidents and promotes positive relationships among children.

Strengths

- A strong safeguarding culture understood and promoted by all stakeholders.
- Knowledgeable and proactive safeguarding leadership.
- Well-established systems for recording, monitoring and responding to concerns.
- Effective governance oversight and quality assurance processes.
- Strong staff confidence and safeguarding awareness.
- Robust multi-agency working and family support.
- Well-developed pastoral provision promoting emotional wellbeing.
- An effective safeguarding curriculum that helps children understand risks and stay safe.
- Positive pupil outcomes, with children reporting that they feel safe and supported.

Inclusion

Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☐	Expected standard ☒	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐
Comments					

1. Identifying Needs Quickly and Accurately

Leaders have established robust systems for the early identification of children who may face barriers to learning or wellbeing. The SENCO is a qualified member of the senior leadership team with enhanced non-contact time to fulfil her strategic and operational responsibilities. Two additional leaders hold the NPQ in SEN, providing further expertise and capacity.

Children's needs are identified through ongoing assessment, Formative Footprints, teacher observations, parental feedback and specialist assessments. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure that emerging or changing needs are recognised and supported promptly. This includes disadvantaged children, children with SEND, looked-after and previously looked-after children and children with social care involvement.

Ofsted judgement: Securely meets the Expected Standard.

2. High Expectations and the Graduated Approach

Leaders maintain high expectations for all children and ensure that children access a broad and ambitious curriculum irrespective of need or circumstance. The school's Assess-Plan-Do-Review model is consistently applied for children receiving SEND Support and those with individual plans.

Staff receive regular training on SEND processes, adaptive teaching and evidence-informed inclusion strategies. Adaptive teaching practices are well established and include:

- Personalised visual timetables
- Structured work and task chunking
- Individual learning spaces
- Movement and sensory breaks

- Planned time-out opportunities

Evidence-informed approaches, including recommendations from the Education Endowment Foundation, underpin classroom practice. Children with EHCPs receive carefully tailored provision, individualised timetables and targeted support aligned to their outcomes.

Ofsted judgement: Meets the Expected Standard and demonstrates aspects of the Strong Standard through consistent implementation and adaptation of provision.

3. Supporting Disadvantaged Children

Leadership responsibility for disadvantaged children sits with the Assistant Headteacher. Individual pupil portfolios identify precise barriers and personalised targets. Each disadvantaged pupil receives weekly dedicated support time to address identified gaps.

The pupil premium strategy is evidence-informed, regularly reviewed and understood by staff. Leaders use assessment information and pupil progress meetings to monitor the progress of disadvantaged children closely and adjust provision where required.

The strategy is aligned with wider school improvement priorities and forms a central element of accountability discussions between leaders and teachers.

Ofsted judgement: Meets the Expected Standard and demonstrates strong aspects through rigorous monitoring and personalised provision.

4. Supporting Children with SEND

The SENCO has the authority, leadership status and expertise expected within the revised inspection framework. Leaders monitor the progress and wellbeing of children with SEND systematically and adapt provision when needed.

Reasonable adjustments are made across the curriculum, wider provision and school environment. Support is regularly reviewed to ensure effectiveness and children are supported successfully through transitions within school and into secondary education.

Strong partnerships with Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers and specialist services ensure that external advice is acted upon effectively.

Ofsted judgement: Meets the Strong Standard descriptor that leaders monitor provision rigorously and adjust strategies to ensure barriers are addressed effectively.

5. Supporting Children Known to Social Care

A designated teacher, who is also a member of the leadership team, oversees provision for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Leaders work closely with the Virtual School, social workers and external professionals. Personal Education Plans are used effectively to improve educational outcomes, attendance, wellbeing and wider participation.

Leaders ensure that children's social care status informs decision-making about support and intervention.

Ofsted judgement: Securely meets the Expected Standard.

6. Partnership Working and External Specialist Support

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to its role within the local SEND partnership. Leaders access specialist advice proactively and engage positively with local authority services.

The SENCO works closely with Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers and external agencies to secure effective support. Inclusion Panel and GRIP funding are utilised appropriately to prevent needs escalating and to support children at the earliest opportunity.

Alternative provision procedures are understood by senior leaders, with the Headteacher having completed local authority training to ensure appropriate commissioning if required.

Ofsted judgement: Meets the Expected Standard and demonstrates a proactive approach to partnership working.

Inclusion is prioritised within the school's CPD programme. Staff receive regular training on adaptive teaching, SEND processes, intervention planning and evidence-informed practice.

Training is responsive to need and frequently supported by local authority specialists. As a result, staff demonstrate increasing confidence in identifying barriers and implementing effective support strategies.

Leaders ensure that inclusion approaches are understood and applied consistently across the school.

Ofsted judgement: Demonstrates several features of the Strong Standard through ongoing, high-quality training and support.

Overall Inclusion Evaluation

Inclusion at St John's is a significant strength of the school. Leaders identify children's needs quickly and accurately, maintain high expectations and ensure that support is tailored and responsive. The qualified SENCO holds a strategic leadership role, disadvantaged children are monitored rigorously and partnerships with families and external agencies are strong.

The school securely meets all aspects of the **Expected Standard** and demonstrates a number of characteristics associated with the **Strong Standard**, particularly in relation to leadership capacity, rigorous monitoring, evidence-informed practice and the systematic adaptation of provision to improve outcomes and experiences for vulnerable children.

Curriculum and teaching					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☒	Expected standard ☐	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐
Comments					

Leaders have established an ambitious, well-sequenced and evidence-informed curriculum which is consistently implemented across the school. Subject leadership is highly effective, teachers are supported to develop strong subject expertise and assessment is used effectively to identify and address gaps in learning. The curriculum provides children with strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics and prepares them well for future learning.

Strategic Leadership of Curriculum and Teaching

Curriculum leadership is a significant strength. English and mathematics are led by experienced senior leaders who receive protected weekly leadership time to drive improvement, monitor implementation and evaluate impact. Leaders maintain strong engagement with local authority networks and national subject specialists, including Maths Hubs and English Hubs, ensuring that curriculum development and teaching are informed by current evidence and research. This enables leaders to continually refine provision based on evidence and emerging best practice.

All curriculum leaders receive designated non-contact time to monitor their subjects through lesson visits, book scrutiny, assessment analysis, pupil voice and staff feedback. A clearly planned monitoring calendar ensures that evaluation activity is purposeful, systematic and aligned with school improvement priorities. Leaders have an accurate understanding of curriculum strengths and areas for development and take timely action where improvement is required. This aligns strongly with the toolkit's expectations for strategic curriculum leadership.

Securing Strong Foundations in Reading, Writing and Mathematics

Leaders prioritise the foundational knowledge that children need to access the wider curriculum. Phonics is delivered through Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics programme. Following its introduction, leaders ensured full fidelity to the scheme and successfully addressed the phonics action identified at the February 2023 inspection. Reading interventions are closely aligned to ELS and support children to keep up rather than catch up.

Writing is taught through the Pathways to Write framework, providing a coherent progression of knowledge, vocabulary and writing skills. English leadership is characterised by rigorous monitoring and professional dialogue. Staff briefings routinely include assessment analysis, book scrutiny findings, staff voice and curriculum development priorities across reading, phonics, writing and spelling.

Mathematics is underpinned by a carefully sequenced curriculum that draws upon White Rose Mathematics, Master the Curriculum (EYFS), Derbyshire Mathematics Planning, NCETM resources and NRICH curriculum mapping. Evidence-informed initiatives, including Mastering Number in Key Stage 1 and structured mental mathematics provision throughout Years 1 to 6, strengthen children's fluency, reasoning and mathematical confidence. Curriculum overviews ensure statutory coverage while reflecting children's starting points and prior learning. [

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Leaders have ensured that curriculum planning is coherent, progressive and knowledge-rich. Subject policies are in place for all curriculum areas and are supported by whole-school Teaching and Learning and Feedback and Marking policies. These provide a consistent framework for classroom practice and ensure that expectations remain high across all phases and subjects.

Teaching is underpinned by evidence-informed approaches, including research from the Education Endowment Foundation and national professional development programmes. Leaders place a strong emphasis on adaptive teaching, enabling staff to respond effectively to children's needs whilst maintaining curriculum ambition for all learners, including disadvantaged children and children with SEND.

Assessment and Responsive Teaching

Assessment is used effectively to identify misconceptions, monitor progress and inform teaching. Teachers use a range of formative and summative assessment approaches and assessment information is reviewed systematically by leaders.

Regular pupil progress meetings involving class teachers, the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher ensure that barriers to learning are identified promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented. Leaders maintain a clear focus on children at risk of falling behind and ensure that support is timely and targeted. Phonics interventions linked directly to Essential Letters and Sounds provide a strong example of how assessment informs provision and accelerates progress.

The school's Feedback and Marking Policy is reviewed annually and promotes effective assessment for learning strategies. Teachers use ongoing assessment to adapt lessons, address misconceptions and ensure that children build knowledge securely over time.

Professional Development and Subject Expertise

Professional development is of high quality and closely aligned to the School Improvement Plan, curriculum monitoring and educational research. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular opportunities to strengthen subject knowledge, curriculum understanding and pedagogical expertise.

Subject leaders contribute frequently to staff development and a planned annual programme ensures that curriculum developments are shared systematically. Staff training is informed by evidence from Teaching Hubs, Local Authority networks and Education Endowment Foundation research. This creates a strong culture of professional learning and continuous improvement.

Overall Curriculum and Teaching Evaluation

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious, well-planned and consistently implemented. Investment in subject leadership, evidence-informed practice, professional development and assessment ensures that children acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding intended by the curriculum. Strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics enable children to access learning across the curriculum and prepare them well for the next stage of education.

The school securely meets all aspects of the **Expected Standard** and demonstrates several characteristics of the **Strong Standard**, particularly in relation to strategic leadership, curriculum coherence, evidence-informed teaching, assessment and professional learning.

Achievement					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☐	Expected standard ☒	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐
Comments					
Achievement securely meets the Ofsted Strong Standard. Children achieve well across the curriculum and are well prepared for the next stage of education. Over time, attainment has been consistently above or close to national averages across key statutory assessments,					

with particular strengths in reading, mathematics, writing and the Year 4 multiplication Check. Leaders have established robust systems for monitoring achievement and responding quickly to emerging gaps.

Foundational Knowledge and Skills

Leaders prioritise the development of strong foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes demonstrate that children develop the knowledge, skills and fluency required to access the wider curriculum and succeed in future learning. The school's three-year averages in EYFS, phonics, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 outcomes are consistently above or close to national averages.

Phonics outcomes have strengthened following the successful embedding of Essential Letters and Sounds. In 2026, however, 69.6% of Year 1 children achieved the expected standard compared with an emerging national figure of 81.8%,

Attainment in National Assessments

By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment remains a strength:

- Reading: 72.5% achieved the expected standard + compared with 75.1% nationally.
- Mathematics: 78.4% achieved the expected standard + compared with 75.1% nationally.
- Reading, Writing and Mathematics Combined: 66.7% achieved the expected standard compared with 63.3% nationally.
- Higher Standard Reading: 43% compared with 34.4% nationally.
- Higher Standard Mathematics: 36% compared with 31.0% nationally.

These outcomes indicate that children develop secure and detailed knowledge and skills and are well prepared for secondary education. This is consistent with the Ofsted strong standard descriptor that children achieve well and are consistently prepared for their next stage.

Reading progress is particularly strong and places the school significantly above average. Writing and mathematics progress are also positive, indicating that children build successfully on their starting points and acquire the intended curriculum knowledge.

Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check

Performance in the Multiplication Tables Check is a notable strength.

- The average score in 2026 was 20.0, compared with 21% nationally.
- 29.1% of children achieved full marks compared with 37% nationally.

These outcomes demonstrate the impact of the school's carefully sequenced mathematics curriculum and sustained focus on fluency.

Disadvantaged Children

Disadvantaged children generally achieve well and compare favourably with national disadvantaged outcomes in several areas.

By the end of Key Stage 2:

- Reading: 50% achieved the expected standard + compared with 62.5% nationally.
- Mathematics: 50% compared with 61.5% nationally.

Children with SEND

Leaders ensure that children with SEND access the full curriculum and make progress from their starting points. Published outcomes show that attainment varies between cohorts due to small numbers, but leaders use detailed assessment information, adaptive teaching and targeted interventions to monitor progress and remove barriers to learning. SEND children continue to demonstrate strengths in reading and mathematics, including outcomes above national SEND figures in several measures.

Readiness for the Next Stage

Leaders ensure that children are prepared well for the next stage of education. Assessment information, curriculum monitoring and transition arrangements show that children leave St John's with secure foundations in literacy and numeracy and the wider knowledge required for secondary education.

Strong partnerships with local secondary schools, enhanced transition processes and close monitoring of pupil achievement ensure that children are academically, socially and emotionally ready for the next phase of learning. The school's outcomes align closely with the Ofsted expectation that children develop the knowledge and skills necessary for future success and progression.

Overall Evaluation

School performance information demonstrates that achievement is securely strong. Children consistently attain above or close to national averages, progress is positive, foundations in reading and mathematics are particularly secure, and disadvantaged children achieve well compared with national disadvantaged outcomes. Leaders have established effective systems for monitoring attainment and progress, identifying underachievement and ensuring that children receive timely support. As a result, children are well prepared for the next stage of education and fulfil the characteristics of the Ofsted Strong Standard for achievement.

Attendance and behaviour					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☒	Expected standard ☐	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐
Comments					
Leaders have established a positive, inclusive culture built upon high expectations, strong relationships and consistent systems. Attendance is prioritised, behaviour expectations are clearly understood and children benefit from a calm, orderly and supportive environment in which					

they can learn and thrive. This aligns closely with the strong standard descriptors within the 2026 Inspection Toolkit, particularly in relation to high attendance, effective support for vulnerable groups and a culture that is highly conducive to learning.

Attendance

Attendance is strategically led by the Deputy Headteacher through a robust policy that is reviewed annually and shared with children, staff and parents. Leaders maintain accurate attendance systems through effective collaboration between class teachers, office staff, the Education Welfare Assistant and senior leaders. Attendance data is analysed regularly, enabling leaders to identify concerns early and respond appropriately. Governors receive regular attendance reports and provide effective challenge regarding attendance procedures and outcomes.

The school's attendance culture reflects the expectations outlined within the inspection framework. Attendance is consistently above national averages and has shown sustained improvement since the pandemic. Attendance for disadvantaged children and children with SEND remains above or broadly in line with national figures, while persistent absence for all children remains below national averages and is below or in line with national averages for disadvantaged children and children with SEND.

Leaders employ a graduated and highly supportive approach to improving attendance. Case studies demonstrate effective partnership working with families and external agencies, including Early Help, Educational Psychology and Local Authority Inclusion Services. Targeted interventions, such as the pupil premium funded Books with Breakfast provision, help remove barriers and support vulnerable children to attend regularly. Good attendance is recognised and celebrated, reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance throughout the school community.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Leaders have established clear expectations through the school's behaviour policy, which is informed by the principles of assertive discipline and reviewed annually. Expectations are communicated through the child-friendly "Follow the Bees" behaviour framework, which is understood and applied consistently across the school.

The behaviour system combines high expectations with an inclusive approach that recognises the differing needs of individual children. Positive behaviour is celebrated regularly through reward systems and weekly celebration worship, where children demonstrate pride in

their own achievements and genuinely celebrate the success of others. These occasions also reinforce the school's Christian values and culture of mutual respect.

Where behaviour falls below expectations, consequences are applied consistently and proportionately. The school's "sorry slip" system promotes constructive communication between home and school and enables leaders to work proactively with families to resolve concerns. Behaviour patterns are monitored by leaders and reported to governors through regular analysis of behaviour, suspension, bullying and racist incident data.

Parental feedback provides additional evidence of impact, with the overwhelming majority of parents reporting in surveys that behaviour is managed effectively at St John's.

Inclusive Support and Behaviour Intervention

Leaders ensure that behaviour strategies are adapted appropriately to meet children's needs whilst maintaining high expectations for all. A particular strength is the school's lunchtime nurture provision, now established for three years, which provides structured support and activities for children who require additional assistance with social interaction and self-regulation during less structured parts of the day.

Staff understand that some children require personalised approaches and reasonable adjustments. Interventions are carefully monitored and adapted to ensure they remain effective. This inclusive approach helps children develop self-regulation, positive relationships and successful participation in school life.

Bullying Prevention and Pupil Safety

Leaders take a proactive approach to preventing bullying and promoting positive relationships. The Anti-Bullying Lead, who is also the PSHE Lead, works closely with children to develop a child-friendly anti-bullying policy which is revisited annually. Regular professional development and local authority engagement ensure that practice remains current and effective.

Bullying, racist incidents and suspension data are monitored closely and reviewed by governors. Children are taught how to report concerns and leaders respond promptly when issues arise. As a result, children report feeling safe, supported and well cared for.

Overall Evaluation

Attendance and behaviour are significant strengths of the school. Leaders have established a culture where children understand expectations, show positive attitudes to learning and demonstrate respect for others. Attendance is consistently above national figures, persistent absence remains low and targeted support successfully removes barriers for vulnerable children. Behaviour systems are fair, inclusive and consistently applied, resulting in a calm, purposeful learning environment where children flourish.

The school securely demonstrates the characteristics of the Ofsted Strong Standard for Attendance and Behaviour through its highly inclusive culture, effective support systems, strong pupil conduct and sustained positive outcomes over time

Personal development and well-being					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☒	Expected standard ☐	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐

Comments

Leaders have established a coherent and carefully planned programme that extends beyond the taught curriculum and is rooted in the school's Christian vision, values and understanding of the needs of its community. Children benefit from extensive leadership opportunities, strong pastoral support, high-quality wellbeing provision and meaningful experiences that prepare them well for life in modern Britain and beyond.

Strategic Leadership of Personal Development and Wellbeing

Leaders place a high priority on the wellbeing of both children and staff. Wellbeing responsibilities are clearly delegated, with senior leaders and designated staff leading provision for staff welfare and pupil wellbeing. Professional development supports this work through regular

training delivered both internally and by external specialists, including Compass Changing Lives. Trauma-informed practice, emotional wellbeing and mental health feature prominently within the school's professional development programme, ensuring staff have the knowledge and confidence to support children effectively.

The PSHE lead attends regular local authority updates and ensures that the curriculum remains current and aligned with statutory guidance, including forthcoming changes to Relationships Education and RSE requirements. As a result, leaders maintain an accurate understanding of children's needs and ensure that the personal development curriculum continually evolves to meet them. This reflects the inspection toolkit expectation that leaders understand their context and provide a coherent programme of personal development and wellbeing.

Wellbeing and Pastoral Support

Wellbeing is embedded throughout school life. Children benefit from a range of initiatives including Wellbeing Wednesdays, wellbeing-focused clubs and the work of the Wellbeing Warriors. A dedicated member of staff oversees pupil wellbeing and works closely with children requiring additional support.

Pastoral care is a particular strength. Staff know children well and identify needs early. Leaders provide targeted support and work effectively with families and external agencies where appropriate. The school's medical welfare assistant plays a significant role in supporting children with medical needs through individual healthcare plans, risk assessments and the removal of barriers to participation, ensuring all children can access the full range of opportunities available.

These systems closely align with the toolkit's expectation that pastoral provision is highly effective, responsive and matched carefully to children's needs.

Personal Development Curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is well planned and supported by the Derbyshire PSHE Matters programme. Leaders regularly review content to ensure that it remains relevant, age-appropriate and reflective of children's needs and current statutory guidance.

Personal development is further enhanced through spiritual journals, which provide opportunities for reflection, spiritual growth and personal understanding. Collective worship, Christian values and curriculum learning are carefully interwoven, helping children develop the knowledge, understanding and character needed to contribute positively to society.

Following the February 2023 inspection, leaders strengthened the link between Christian Values and British Values. British Values now feature explicitly within collective worship, ensuring children develop a clear understanding of democracy, individual liberty, mutual respect and the rule of law alongside the school's Christian ethos.

Pupil Leadership and Character Development

A significant strength of the school is the breadth of meaningful leadership opportunities available to children. These include:

- Kolkata Companions
- Worship Assistants
- Wellbeing Warriors
- Class Ambassadors
- Playground Pals
- Mini Leaders

These roles are collectively known as changemakers at St John's and enable children to contribute actively to school improvement, support their peers, lead worship, promote inclusion and champion initiatives such as anti-bullying, courageous advocacy and healthy lifestyles. Children learn responsibility, collaboration, citizenship and service through authentic leadership experiences.

The inspection toolkit highlights opportunities for children to become active citizens and contribute positively to school life as indicators of strong personal development. St John's provides these opportunities extensively.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The school's long-standing partnership with Scott Lane School in Kolkata provides children with a deep understanding of diversity, disadvantage and global responsibility.

Leaders have sustained and developed this international partnership over many years, providing opportunities for children to learn about life in India and global inequalities. Curriculum planning identifies explicit opportunities for learning about different cultures and communities, helping children become informed and compassionate global citizens.

Through collective worship, courageous advocacy, charitable initiatives and international links, children develop empathy, respect and a strong understanding of their responsibilities towards others.

Enrichment and Wider Opportunities

Leaders provide a rich programme of enrichment opportunities that develops children's talents, interests and confidence.

Music provision is particularly strong. All children in Lower Key Stage 2 receive weekly instrumental tuition biannually due to mixed-age classes and have access to a loan instrument for the academic year. Additional opportunities include choir, orchestra, peripatetic lessons and performances within the local community.

Sporting participation is monitored carefully to ensure equality of opportunity. Leaders use participation data to identify underrepresented groups and actively increase access to clubs and competitive sport through the Amber Valley School Sports Partnership. This ensures that disadvantaged children and specific groups, including girls, can participate fully in wider opportunities.

Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 further support children's personal development by developing resilience, independence, teamwork and responsibility.

Overall Evaluation

Personal Development and Wellbeing are strengths of the school. Leaders provide a well-planned, inclusive and ambitious programme that reflects both the school's Christian vision and the needs of its children. Extensive leadership opportunities, strong wellbeing provision, effective pastoral support, rich enrichment experiences and a commitment to developing informed global citizens ensure that children are confident, respectful, resilient and well prepared for life beyond St John's.

The school securely meets all aspects of the Ofsted Expected Standard and demonstrates many features of the Strong Standard, particularly in relation to pupil leadership, pastoral support, character development, wellbeing and the breadth of meaningful opportunities available to all children.

Leadership and governance					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☒	Expected standard ☐	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐

Comments

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development and use this knowledge to drive continuous improvement. Leadership is stable, experienced and strategically focused, whilst governors provide effective support and challenge. Professional learning, staff wellbeing and inclusion are central to leadership decision-making and contribute positively to outcomes for children.

Strategic Leadership and School Improvement

The senior leadership team, comprising the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and Business Manager, has provided stability and continuity for over a decade. Leaders have a strong track record of school improvement and a clear understanding of the school's context and priorities. Strategic leadership is strengthened through regular leadership meetings, clear lines of responsibility and distributed leadership across subject and phase leaders.

The wider middle leadership structure, including leaders for mathematics, SEND and EYFS, ensures strong oversight of curriculum development, teaching, learning and achievement. Leaders act decisively when areas for development are identified. Recent examples include the introduction of additional lunchtime support and nurture provision in response to pupil and staff feedback, demonstrating leaders' responsiveness to the changing needs of the school community.

The school is currently implementing a five-year strategic plan (2022–2027), with governors and leaders reviewing progress annually against clearly identified success criteria. Improvement priorities are evidence-informed, measurable and aligned to the needs of children.

Governance, Accountability and Challenge

Governance is effective and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge. The governing body is fully staffed and benefits from a breadth of expertise. Governors have a secure understanding of their statutory duties and monitor school performance through a structured programme of committee meetings, governor visits and strategic reviews.

Governors routinely evaluate progress against school improvement priorities and use financial benchmarking, staffing information, attainment data and stakeholder feedback to hold leaders to account. Curriculum committee meetings include visits to classrooms and discussions with leaders, enabling governors to evaluate first-hand the impact of school improvement work.

A particular strength is the governing body's commitment to staff wellbeing. Annual confidential staff surveys commissioned by governors provide leaders with valuable insights and ensure workload and wellbeing remain strategic priorities.

Professional Learning and Development

Leaders have established a strong culture of professional learning and continuous improvement. Professional development is carefully planned and aligned to school priorities, monitoring findings and educational research. Staff are encouraged to develop expertise and leadership capacity, reflected in the number of staff completing National Professional Qualifications in recent years.

Subject leaders are allocated dedicated leadership time to monitor standards, analyse achievement, lead curriculum development and provide professional development for colleagues. A structured subject review programme ensures monitoring activities remain manageable, focused and impactful.

Early Career Teachers benefit from a comprehensive induction programme including mentoring, professional development and protected time. Leaders invest strategically in workforce development and succession planning to ensure sustained capacity for improvement.

Professional Culture and Staff Wellbeing

Leaders model high standards of professionalism, integrity and ambition. Staff report feeling valued, supported and involved in decision-making. Systems are in place to ensure workload remains manageable and that concerns can be raised openly.

Wellbeing is given a high priority. Leaders seek staff views regularly and use feedback to inform decision-making. Policies and procedures promote a safe and respectful working environment and protect staff from harassment, discrimination or victimisation.

This positive professional culture contributes to staff retention, strong morale and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children.

Engagement with Parents and the Community

Leaders have established strong and constructive relationships with parents and the wider community. Regular communication through newsletters, weekly emails and the Headteacher's blog ensures transparency and promotes trust. The introduction of the new website and Instagram in September 2026 have further enhanced the relationships.

Parents are provided with a range of workshops and information sessions, including phonics, relationships education, statutory assessment and residential visit briefings. These opportunities strengthen partnerships and support parents in understanding their children'ss learning and development.

The school enjoys a positive reputation within the local community and parental feedback remains overwhelmingly positive.

Collaboration and System Leadership

Leaders work collaboratively with other schools and professional networks to strengthen provision. Through the Belper Cluster Collaboration, staff engage in regular professional dialogue, moderation activities and leadership networks.

Partnership working includes collaboration between headteachers, SENCOs, business managers and curriculum leaders. The annual writing moderation programme provides valuable opportunities for external validation and strengthens assessment accuracy.

Leaders actively seek support, challenge and professional learning beyond the school, ensuring practice remains informed by current research and best practice.

Commitment to Inclusion and Vulnerable Children

Leaders consistently act in the best interests of all children, particularly disadvantaged children, children with SEND and those facing barriers to learning or wellbeing. Robust systems monitor progress, attendance and welfare, enabling early intervention where concerns arise.

Leadership of inclusion is strong and coordinated effectively between senior leaders and the SENCO. Investment in pastoral support, wellbeing provision and targeted interventions demonstrates leaders' commitment to ensuring all children can thrive academically and personally.

Overall Evaluation

Leadership and governance are strengths of the school. Leaders provide clear strategic direction, maintain high expectations and create a positive professional culture focused on continuous improvement. Governors provide effective challenge and support, hold leaders to account and ensure that resources are used thoughtfully and strategically.

The school securely meets all aspects of the Ofsted Expected Standard and demonstrates several key features of the Strong Standard, particularly through its stable leadership, rigorous self-evaluation, culture of professional learning, effective governance and unwavering commitment to improving outcomes and experiences for all children.

Early years in schools					
Grading	Exceptional ☐	Strong standard ☐	Expected standard ☒	Needs attention ☐	Urgent Improvement ☐

Comments

The school demonstrates a highly effective and well-structured approach to Early Years provision, ensuring that all children receive a strong, secure and developmentally appropriate start. Transition arrangements are robust. The EYFS lead conducts pre-school visits to meet children in their early settings, engaging with key workers and, where appropriate, parents. Parents are further supported through welcome evenings, induction meetings and 'Mouse Club' transition sessions, which provide children with a transitional object to support emotional security. Additional visits and personalised meetings are arranged for children with SEND or vulnerable circumstances, ensuring early identification of need and tailored support.

Strong safeguarding practice is embedded across the phase. Staffing ratios are consistently maintained, environments are risk assessed, and all necessary documentation—accidents, medication, attendance and SEND records—is monitored rigorously. Staff hold appropriate paediatric first aid training, policies reflect statutory requirements and are implemented consistently, and both indoor and outdoor environments meet safety expectations, including participation in whole-school fire drills.

The leadership team maintains a rigorous monitoring cycle. Through regular observations, planning scrutiny, analysis of assessment data, and professional discussion, leaders evaluate strengths and identify areas for development. Moderation occurs termly, both internally and through external partners. Leaders seek the views of children, staff and families to triangulate self-evaluation, ensuring judgements are accurate and aligned with statutory frameworks.

Curriculum intent is clear and ambitious. The vision is to provide a language-rich, play-based curriculum that builds secure foundations for future learning, aligned with the school's wider aim of equity and high expectations for all children. Staff understand progression clearly, plan using a structured and sequenced curriculum (including Creative Curriculum, ELS phonics and White Rose maths), and can articulate why specific activities support conceptual development. Continuous provision is purposeful, accessible and designed to promote independence, exploration and problem-solving. SEND provision is embedded seamlessly, with adaptations such as visual supports, sensory breaks and reduced language load used naturally within daily practice.
Implementation is strong. High-quality interactions, modelling of vocabulary, storytelling, sustained shared thinking and sensitive scaffolding ensure language development is prioritised. Phonics teaching is systematic and taught with fidelity, with regular assessment and immediate 'keep-up' intervention for children at risk of falling behind. Staff tailor interactions to EAL learners and provide dual-language communication for families. Forest School enhances personal development, resilience and language acquisition, particularly for vulnerable learners.
Assessment is purposeful, accurate and not excessive. Leaders ensure starting points are established through home visits, Stay and Play, preschool information and baseline observations. Nursery and Reception teams use this knowledge to plan developmentally appropriate experiences that build communication, self-regulation, early reading and number sense. Regular tracking identifies gaps swiftly, enabling targeted intervention for SEND, disadvantaged children and those with lower starting points.

Impact is evident. Children demonstrate strong progress from individual starting points, with improved vocabulary, independence, self-regulation and early reading confidence. Reception children leave well-prepared for Year 1 with secure early literacy and mathematical foundations. Vulnerable groups make good progress due to timely support, and overall GLD outcomes are in line with or above national expectations. Children transition to Year 1 as confident, enthusiastic learners with strong foundations for future success.

Evidence of working at the strong standard includes

Leaders demonstrate strong expertise in early childhood development, using their extensive background—including experience within the Early Years Advisory Service—to shape high expectations and ensure consistent, high-quality practice. This expertise enables precise interpretation of statutory requirements, effective mentoring of staff and the development of well-sequenced progression maps from Nursery to Reception and into Year 1. Leaders make informed decisions using baseline information, identifying gaps swiftly and ensuring early, targeted intervention for vulnerable children, including those with SEND, disadvantaged children and those known to social care.

Teaching is adaptive and responsive. Staff use continuous observation to adjust provision, groupings and teaching strategies, ensuring that children who struggle with early skills such as blending or subitising receive immediate, targeted support. High-quality interactions underpin daily practice, with adults modelling ambitious vocabulary, extending children'ss thinking and supporting communication and self-regulation throughout routines and play. Staff are highly sensitive to quieter or hesitant children, using calm, inclusive strategies to build confidence and participation.

Outcomes over time show that most children make strong progress from their starting points, with GLD typically above national expectations. Where results fluctuate, leaders' analysis is robust, and strengthened early intervention is already in place. Children leave EYFS confident, articulate and ready for Year 1.