

Phoenix Primary School

Address: Birchfield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L7 9LY

Unique reference number (URN): 133702

Inspection report: 22 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Overall, pupils' attendance is below the national average. However, this does not reflect the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is broadly average when compared to similar groups nationally. Leaders use their understanding of attendance across all groups of pupils to recognise and respond effectively to the challenges that some pupils may face. Leaders have high expectations and communicate the importance of positive attendance across the school community. They work with families quickly and effectively when a pupil's absence becomes a concern. Consequently, attendance improves for these pupils over time.

Pupils behave well. Staff anticipate and provide support for pupils who may struggle at certain times of the day. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful. Pupils understand and follow the school's well-established rules and routines. When a pupil's behaviour falls below expectations, staff respond quietly and effectively. Although the school is a busy hive of activity, the atmosphere is calm and well ordered. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Bullying and racist language are not tolerated. Incidents of bullying or harassment are not common, and leaders respond quickly and effectively if they occur.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders are highly knowledgeable about the early years. They ensure that the provision is carefully designed to meet the needs of children beginning their educational journey at this school. Children are safe and develop warm, caring relationships with staff.

Staff are highly trained in the development of children's communication skills. They skilfully use every opportunity to talk to children and support their acquisition of language. This includes those children who are initially reluctant to speak. As a result, children gradually communicate with growing confidence and understanding. Staff teach phonics effectively, and children use this knowledge to read with increasing accuracy. Children develop a secure pencil grip and learn to form letters correctly. They develop the early mathematical knowledge they need to recognise patterns and shapes and to use numbers with fluency.

Staff make full use of the outdoor environment to give children the chance to use these skills and explore the world around them. Staff know each child well and provide extra practice and guidance when needed. As a result, children generally achieve well across the curriculum and are ready to make the move into Year 1. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress through the curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a culture where staff are alert to any barriers to pupils' learning or wellbeing. Staff work closely with families to develop an understanding of each pupil's individual needs. This includes taking advice from external specialists. As a result, any barriers to pupils' success are quickly and accurately identified.

Leaders understand the challenges faced by disadvantaged pupils and use additional funding appropriately to support these pupils. For example, staff are highly trained to provide additional support with phonics and reading. Leaders ensure that all pupils can access the full range of opportunities the school offers and feel a sense of belonging to the school community.

Staff use their training to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. For example, they skilfully support pupils who struggle to manage their emotions. This enhances pupils' wellbeing and supports them to remain calm and engage with lessons. Staff work effectively with pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, these pupils gradually develop their understanding and confidence. This means that they are increasingly able to benefit from the full curriculum.

The school's special educational needs unit is effective. Staff use effective strategies to develop pupils' early language and communication skills. Behaviour is positive and pupils are safe.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The school has been through a turbulent and challenging time. Since the new leadership team was formed in September 2025, leaders have used their detailed and accurate understanding of every aspect of the school's provision to make decisions that have consistently been in the best interests of pupils. Leaders have acted quickly to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching. While there is more to do, this has improved the consistency of teaching across the school. Leaders' actions are beginning to improve the achievement of pupils across the school.

Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties. For example, they use their training to ensure that staff are recruited safely. They offer appropriate levels of challenge and support, and they ensure that funding, such as the pupil premium grant, is used effectively to support pupils facing disadvantage.

Leaders' work to develop a positive school culture has been effective. This is reflected in their consideration of staff wellbeing and workload. Staff are valued and understand how their roles contribute to the wellbeing and success of pupils. Leaders provide staff with the professional learning they need to develop their expertise. When changes are made to the curriculum, leaders provide staff with the training and resources to implement it effectively. Leaders provide teachers with time to work closely together, to learn from each other and develop their practice.

In the short time they have been at the school, leaders have fostered positive, trusting relationships with parents and carers and the school community.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a comprehensive programme to support pupils' personal development. They weave opportunities for pupils to develop qualities such as resilience and responsibility throughout the whole school curriculum. During each playtime and lunchtime, leaders provide all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with the

space and resources for high-quality play. Pupils make full use of the outdoor environment to build, dig, climb and enjoy learning about the world around them. Pupils take responsibility for their actions. They learn to use resources sensibly, tidy up after themselves and develop the skills they need to work together. Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They discuss discrimination against certain groups of people with compassion and respect. These activities broaden pupils' experiences and prepare them for life beyond school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders respond to particular issues when needed. For example, visitors work with pupils to raise awareness of criminal exploitation and gang culture. Visitors also enhance the school's work to raise awareness of online risks. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and in the local community.

Leaders design the personal development offer to ensure that it is open to all pupils. This includes pupils in the special educational needs unit. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and the way their bodies change as they get older. Leaders work with families to ensure this is taught in a way that is appropriate for the age and stage of development of each pupil. Leaders anticipate and reduce barriers to participation in the school's enrichment activities. This means that every child benefits, and take-up is high from all groups of pupils across the school.

Leaders know pupils and families well. Pastoral support is effective and pupils know who to ask for support if they need it.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils' attainment, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is consistently below the national average, particularly for 2024/25. Although leaders' swift actions since then have improved the knowledge and understanding of pupils currently in the school, over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. For example, pupils have gaps in important knowledge that hinder their ability to write accurately and express their ideas. In addition, their knowledge and skills across the wider curriculum are not secure. Consequently, pupils are not prepared well for the next stage of their education.

In contrast, pupils are reading with increasing fluency and their mathematical knowledge is more secure. This is reflected in the Year 4 multiplication tables check, where pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Older pupils use this knowledge to solve more complex problems as they progress through the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. They have acted quickly to address weaknesses in teaching by revising the curriculum and providing staff with the necessary training and resources to deliver it effectively. These actions are helping to improve the quality of teaching. However, this work is at an early stage, and the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Consequently, gaps in some pupils' learning are not addressed effectively. In addition, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning and secure their understanding.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge and skills over time. There is an emphasis on the development of important skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers provide additional support in reading, phonics and mathematics when needed. This helps pupils to keep up with lessons. However, support to close gaps in pupils' learning is less effective in writing. Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) both in mainstream classes and in the special educational needs unit. Staff are skilled at adapting teaching and resources to ensure that pupils with SEND can access lessons alongside their classmates.

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

Pupils are proud to be part of their rich and diverse school community. They approach school life with optimism and have a positive attitude to learning new things. Pupils benefit from lessons that are brought to life by trips and visitors to the school. For example, pupils' work on the Great Fire of London involved a visit from the fire service. These experiences help connect pupils' learning to the world around them. However, pupils do not always securely remember the things they have learned in the past. As a result, their attainment is below the national average. Although pupils' knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics is improving, some have gaps in their knowledge that are not closing quickly enough. This hinders how well prepared they are for their next steps in education.

Pupils who experience barriers to success are supported well. This includes pupils facing disadvantage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It also includes pupils who recently arrived in the country and those who speak English as an additional language. Each pupil benefits from the expertise of staff in reducing any barriers. This allows them to integrate fully into the school community.

Pupils contribute to school life through opportunities to represent their classmates on the school's values team. This important role ensures that pupils' opinions are heard and helps shape the school's extensive range of experiences. For example, pupils take part in sports such as water polo and ball games. They learn about careers in the medical profession in their 'Junior Doctors' club.

Pupils behave well, learn to play nicely together and have positive, trusting relationships

with staff. Incidents of bullying do not happen often, and they are dealt with effectively. Pupils are safe, happy and attend regularly.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff identify and address gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge, particularly in writing, quickly and effectively.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to revisit prior learning so that their knowledge becomes more secure over time and they are better prepared for their next steps in education.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Phil Daniels.

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

This inspection took place on 22 September and 23 September 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, those responsible for governance, staff and pupils in the school during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school includes a special educational needs unit for 30 pupils with specific learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, visual impairment, speech, language and communication needs and/or autism.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Peter Kelly

Lead inspector:

Chris Fielding, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Jen Sloan, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 22 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

227

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 268

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

49.30%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.5%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

18.94%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 4.1%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

17.18%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

SEN unit

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	21%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	9%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	24%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	47%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	45%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	47%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	23%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	9%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	24%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	34%	71%	Below

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	37%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	27%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

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

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

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	13%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	10%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	20%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	10%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	39%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	35%	63%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	50%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	33%	60%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	15%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	10%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	20%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	14%	58%	Below

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	30%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	15%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	30%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	43%	59%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	13%	68%	-55 pp
2024/25 (final)	10%	69%	-59 pp
2023/24 (final)	20%	67%	-47 pp
2022/23 (final)	10%	66%	-57 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	39%	80%	-40 pp
2024/25 (final)	35%	81%	-46 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	80%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	78%	-45 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	15%	78%	-63 pp
2024/25 (final)	10%	78%	-68 pp
2023/24 (final)	20%	78%	-58 pp
2022/23 (final)	14%	77%	-63 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	30%	80%	-50 pp
2024/25 (final)	15%	81%	-66 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	79%	-49 pp
2022/23 (final)	43%	79%	-36 pp

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	6.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	7.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.8%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	12.9%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	17.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	21.7%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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