

Helme Church of England Academy

Address: Helme, Meltham, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, HD9 5RW

Unique reference number (URN): 145556

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils feel a sense of belonging and do not want to miss school. They attend very well as a result. All pupils' attendance is significantly above the national average, including the attendance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders identify the barriers to attendance well and promote the importance of regular attendance widely. Where a pupil's attendance does not meet their high expectations, they deal with this quickly and effectively, for example through challenging and supportive conversations with pupils and their parents and carers. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced further this year as a result of leaders' work. This is particularly notable in the improved attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Classrooms are calm and orderly places where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils are confident and respectful. Bullying is very uncommon and is not tolerated. There are very few incidents of discriminatory behaviour. If it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Social times are filled with purposeful activity. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to socialise with one another while playing board games, participating in drawing in the art area or playing team games. On the rare occasions that pupils struggle to manage their emotions, leaders support them to do so quickly and effectively.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders have embedded an early years curriculum that gets children off to the best possible start in their learning. The early years area is happy and inviting. There are warm relationships between children and adults. Children enjoy learning and socialising alongside each other.

Children learn to read through a well-structured phonics programme from the moment they start in the Reception Year. They develop their knowledge across the different areas of learning quickly and well. Children learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy through a carefully constructed and engaging programme of personal, social and emotional development programme. Staff teach the curriculum consistently effectively. Adults expertly support children to develop their communication, vocabulary and number skills through frequent, high-quality interactions throughout the day.

Leaders have established a thorough system to enable them to identify children with gaps in their learning. This allows staff to target activities to improve these areas specifically and effectively.

Where children face barriers to their learning, including children who are disadvantaged and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders identify their needs quickly. They implement strategies to support these needs rapidly and well. Most children are very well prepared for Year 1.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils generally achieve well. They typically secure the knowledge and skills that they need across year groups and across the curriculum to be able to build their learning effectively over time. Pupils' attainment in national tests has improved in recent years. In 2025, the attainment of all pupils was in line with, or above, the national average across most published measures. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved similarly over time.

Leaders support pupils who have not secured the necessary basic knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics through a range of interventions. These generally close the gaps in pupils' learning quickly and effectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils who face other barriers to their learning, generally make effective progress from their respective starting points. Pupils are typically well prepared for their next stage of education and for secondary school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and well-informed understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. Leaders have recently changed the curriculum to establish greater consistency in the way in which learning is organised. The curriculum is generally well sequenced across all subjects and year groups. This allows pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time. In recent years, leaders have placed a particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils are well supported in developing their reading skills. This is reflected in the increasing number of pupils who quickly become competent, fluent readers.

Staff generally teach the curriculum well. Teachers use questioning to establish pupils' starting points in their learning and to identify any misconceptions before moving on to new learning. This includes pupils who face barriers to their learning and pupils who have not secured the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Occasionally, teachers do not adapt activities in line with pupils' needs or understanding. Where this is the case, pupils learn less well. Leaders recognise this. They have recently introduced a revised system to establish greater consistency in teaching and assessment across the school. Through clear modelling, teachers help pupils to understand how to structure their independent work effectively. There is some early evidence of the positive impact of this work.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a welcoming culture where everyone is included. They have embedded systems to identify pupils' needs quickly and effectively. They work closely with parents, carers and other professionals to develop the support for pupils who face barriers to their learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are known, or previously known, to social care. Ongoing professional learning ensures staff know how to meet pupils' needs.

To ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need, leaders have established support plans that identify personalised strategies. Leaders frequently review the impact of these strategies and adapt them where necessary. Leaders recognise that where support strategies are more specific, there is greater impact on pupils' learning. They are working to establish greater consistency in this regard.

A small number of pupils with SEND receive support through one-to-one provision. This helps these pupils to learn at a bespoke level. Leaders ensure that these pupils remain fully integrated into the life of the school during social times and through including them in learning alongside other pupils.

Leaders use research evidence when deciding how to use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Staff generally implement strategies to remove barriers to learning effectively. This helps disadvantaged pupils to access all aspects of school life.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a united sense of moral purpose across staff, pupils and parents and carers to ensure that the school's values of 'dream, believe, achieve' are realised for all pupils, regardless of their starting points. Trustees and governors are well informed about the school. They support and challenge leaders to ensure that their vision for excellence is central to the work of the school. They fulfil all of their statutory duties effectively.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have made a number of improvements to the school's provision in recent years. Leaders have been well supported by the trust in doing so. Leaders have identified and prioritised appropriate strategies to improve the learning and wider experiences of pupils further. Some of these strategies are in the early stages of implementation, but they are already showing positive impact.

Leaders have embedded a thorough system of quality assurance across the school. This feeds into a comprehensive, evidence-based professional learning programme, which is aligned to the school's improvement priorities. This supports staff to develop their expertise in a range of areas.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the way in which leaders support their workload and wellbeing. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support that it offers their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an effective and comprehensive personal, social and health education programme across the school. This is an entitlement for all pupils. It develops pupils' knowledge about how to stay safe, both online and offline. Local and national safeguarding risks such as road safety, water safety and knife crime are built into this programme in an age-appropriate way. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships and the importance of diversity. Pupils' understanding of people who are protected by law is well developed and they understand why discrimination is wrong.

Pupils learn about the importance of the fundamental British values, such as tolerance and democracy. They also learn about world religions and cultures beyond the Christian faith, which is central to the school. Their knowledge of these areas is developing but it is not consistently secure.

Pupils value their weekly outdoor learning sessions. These help them to develop their independence, resilience and problem-solving skills. Leaders have established a range of pastoral support across the school, including sensory support and 'calm rooms'. This support helps pupils who are upset or worried to feel reassured and happier.

Leaders offer several after-school clubs to pupils. Many pupils take up these opportunities. These include gardening, multi-sports and board games clubs as well as a school choir. Pupil dance leaders also run a popular dance club for other pupils at lunchtimes. Leaders proactively ensure that vulnerable pupils participate in these activities alongside their peers.

Pupils benefit from a range of educational visits. These include visits to a local sports activity centre and museums as well as a two-night residential trip to an outdoor activity centre.

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

Helme Church of England Academy is a happy, safe and welcoming school. Pupils feel a sense of belonging and they are proud of their school. This includes children in the early years. Pupils want to be at school and they attend well. The school's Christian character is woven within all aspects of school life. It supports pupils to understand the importance of diversity and respect. Pupils behave impeccably. They have warm, friendly relationships with one another and with staff. Bullying happens very rarely. If it does, pupils are confident that staff will deal with it quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy learning at the school. They have high aspirations that are underpinned by the school's values of 'dream, believe, achieve'. Pupils generally achieve well. Many pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They appreciate the way in which staff support them to access all aspects of day-to-day life in school and to thrive.

Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities at the school. They enjoy educational visits that help them to understand and experience the world beyond Helme. For example, Year 4 pupils recently visited a nearby university alongside pupils from a local partner school. Pupils value the extra-curricular clubs that the school offers them. Many pupils participate in these activities. Similarly, there are a number of leadership opportunities for pupils at the school. These include digital leaders, collective worship leaders, pupil librarians, dance leaders and the school council. Pupils speak proudly of the way in which they are able to lead aspects of the school's provision through these roles. For example, digital leaders recently led the organisation of the school's safer internet day.

Next steps

- Leaders should further embed strategies to ensure that staff teach the curriculum consistently well across all subjects and year groups, and that this leads to consistently above-average attainment for pupils in national tests.
 - Leaders should further develop their systems to ensure that the opportunities and experiences of all pupils who face barriers to their learning are consistently enhanced.
 - Leaders should ensure that the personal, social and health education curriculum supports pupils to develop secure and detailed knowledge across all aspects of this area.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Elaine Watson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Baljit Kaur Birring.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with school and trust leaders, trustees, members of the local governing board, staff, parents and carers and pupils during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Leeds. Its last section 48 inspection was in February 2024.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Gillian Spooner

Lead inspector:

Tim Johnson, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Shameem Hussain, Ofsted 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 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

132

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 272

School capacity

140

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)

18.94%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 26.3%

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

7.58%

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: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

27.27%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	77%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	67%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	92%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	85%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	55%	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	67%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	92%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	45%	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	33%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	15%	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	54%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	38%	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	58%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	46%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38%	59%	Below

‘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	33%	68%	-34 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	67%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	15%	66%	-51 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	54%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	80%	-8 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	78%	-40 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	58%	78%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	78%	-6 pp
2022/23 (final)	46%	77%	-31 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	54%	80%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	71%	79%	-8 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	79%	-41 pp

‘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)	4.2%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.4%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.9%	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)	10.5%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	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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