

Stelling Minnis Church of England Primary School

Address: Bossingham Road, Stelling Minnis, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 6DU

Unique reference number (URN): 118681

Inspection report: 15 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.

Strong standard ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children experience a highly positive start to school life in the early years because staff know them well and create a warm, structured and engaging environment. They learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Staff build trusting relationships and talk with children in meaningful ways during play, routines and focused activities.

Early years staff are highly knowledgeable about childhood development. They have carefully sequenced the curriculum and ensured that each aspect of a child's day is organised around intentional learning opportunities. Teaching is purposeful and well resourced. Activities are carefully chosen to help children develop independence and curiosity, as well as key foundational knowledge. Early reading is taught consistently well and children are keen and excited to gain new knowledge. Regular and detailed checks on learning help staff identify gaps quickly. This accurate understanding of children's starting points and progress ensures that staff plan ambitious steps. Staff confidently adapt activities so that all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop their skills and knowledge across all areas of learning and development.

Children are well prepared for Year 1 because staff work closely with parents, carers and school staff. This ensures that expectations, routines and early learning foundations are firmly embedded throughout the early years.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders know their school and the local community very well. The new headteacher has formed a team that has been determined and unfaltering in its focus to create a school which puts pupils' learning, development and preparation for life at the heart of their actions and decision-making. They have implemented many rapid and effective improvements in the last year. Leaders are visible role models who set clear expectations and promote a positive culture of learning.

Leaders constantly review and develop all areas of the school's work. They have appropriately identified the right actions to take and prioritised them to ensure rapid and sustainable improvements. For example, they have identified clear priorities to further improve the consistency of teaching across the school. Leaders have also worked effectively with staff to stabilise the school after a period of turbulence. Leaders have built constructive relationships with parents and carers, who are highly positive about the work of the school.

Professional development is central to the school's improvement work. Leaders provide regular coaching, guidance and training that helps staff develop their skills and confidence. Staff value the support they receive and appreciate the opportunities available to develop professionally. Leaders place a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing and workload. As a result, staff feel valued and trusted to contribute to the school improvement journey.

Governors understand the school and know its strengths and areas for ongoing improvement. They bring a wealth of expertise and contribute actively to shaping the

school's culture and expectations. They offer the right blend of challenge and support and ensure that statutory duties are met.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Pupils benefit from a well-planned and highly effective personal development programme that supports the school's vision for all children to 'shine brightly and reach their full potential'. Leaders ensure that personal development is woven through school life, responding thoughtfully to pupils' needs and experiences.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about their responsibilities as student ambassadors and councillors. They value these leadership opportunities and understand how they are linked to fundamental British values such as democracy and respect. They understand the importance of rules and relationships and demonstrate these values in their daily interactions. Pupils treat one another with kindness and show little tolerance for unkindness or discrimination.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' social and emotional development. Pastoral support is thoughtfully provided with access to specialist support for any pupils who require it. As a result, pupils grow in confidence, resilience and independence. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger children and contribute strongly to the welcoming culture of the school. Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. They understand how to stay safe and healthy, including healthy eating, safe screen time and being safe online. Pupils learn how to build positive and respectful friendships.

A rich enrichment programme broadens pupils' experiences and interests. Opportunities such as a talent show and sporting activities enable pupils to develop new skills and talents. Residential visits and trips further develop pupils' teamwork, perseverance and character. The farm school experiences are a particular strength of the offer and highly valued by pupils. Leaders carefully monitor participation and ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who face other barriers, can access the full range of opportunities available. As a result, pupils develop into confident, respectful and well-rounded young people who are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Most pupils achieve well. Generally, they learn the knowledge and skills intended in the curriculum. The work they produce in a range of subjects is of an appropriate standard. Pupils are developing the confidence and skills they need across the curriculum. Leaders work to refine the curriculum ensures that there is now a focus on developing pupils' basic skills, including phonics, reading, spelling, handwriting and number facts.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make suitable progress from their starting points. Outcomes in national

assessments are broadly in line with national averages. Outcomes in reading, writing and maths at the end of key stage 2 are a strength of the school and are typically above national averages. Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve in areas such as the multiplication tables check in Year 4, where achievement has been less positive. Most pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have raised the profile of attendance and are determined that all pupils attend well and benefit fully from what the school has to offer. They recognise that pupils attend well when they feel valued and are taught well. They carefully check pupils' attendance rates and have been increasingly successful in reducing the barriers that affect regular attendance. Leaders use their knowledge of families well, recognising and addressing individual barriers with care and understanding. This has helped improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for most pupils, including those with more complex needs.

Warm and nurturing relationships underpin the culture in the school. Staff understand the school's approach to behaviour, and clear routines are consistently embedded from the start of Reception Year onwards. Pupils pay close attention in class and consistently display positive attitudes towards their learning. This creates an environment that is highly conducive to learning. Pupils are self-disciplined and manage their emotions well. They go out of their way to be kind to one another, sharing resources, holding doors open and supporting younger children during social times. Pupils know which trusted adults they can speak to if they are worried. They say that bullying is extremely rare and dealt with swiftly.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have refined the curriculum to ensure that it is now well designed and logically sequenced. It includes a clear progression of knowledge and skills from early years to Year 6. Leaders have chosen their approach to the curriculum carefully to support consistency in how well pupils learn. The curriculum and teaching are inclusive by design. This means that pupils with barriers to their learning typically access the full curriculum.

Some aspects of the curriculum, such as phonics and early reading, are embedded well and ensure pupils become fluent and confident readers over time. Pupils across the school have frequent opportunities to listen to and read books. Some developments of the curriculum are at an earlier stage. Progress is clear in these areas but the full impact has not yet been realised.

Typically, teachers have the skills and knowledge to teach subjects confidently. They make sensible adaptations so that pupils can take part and succeed. Pupils who need additional help receive it in a timely and effective way. Staff generally make a range of suitable checks on pupils' learning during lessons. However, some gaps in knowledge are not closed as quickly as they could be because they are not consistently identified or addressed swiftly. Leaders are providing further support and training where this is needed.

Inclusion is at the heart of the school. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well and are determined that every child is welcomed, valued and successful. Leaders have implemented systems that enable staff to identify needs quickly and provide effective support. Staff have high expectations for all pupils. They generally ensure that barriers to learning and participation are reduced so that pupils can be fully involved in school life.

Pupils typically receive the additional support they need to help them succeed academically, socially and emotionally. As a result, they are happy, confident and make progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are valued members of the school community who thrive alongside their peers. Staff and leaders work closely with families and external agencies to secure support that meets pupils' individual needs. The school gives a high priority to pupils' wellbeing. Pupils feel safe, respected and included. They enjoy coming to school because they experience a sense of belonging.

Leaders use additional funding to effectively widen access to learning, enrichment and broader opportunities for pupils who are disadvantaged. They evaluate the impact of their work carefully, ensuring continuous improvement. Their unwavering commitment to inclusion helps pupils overcome barriers and achieve.

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

Pupils throughout the school are polite, friendly and welcoming. They belong to a school community where staff know them well, value their contributions and encourage them to do their best. Pupils consistently demonstrate the school's values of curiosity, courage and compassion.

Pupils receive support that enables them to achieve success, socially and academically. This includes pupils with barriers to learning, for example disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is improving. This is because leaders take the time to understand pupils' and families' circumstances and provide personalised support.

Pupils benefit from a very calm school environment that is highly conducive to learning. There is very little disruption to learning because pupils want to meet staff's high expectations for their behaviour. Children in early years quickly understand the routines and expectations and aspire to meet them. These routines continue throughout the school, helping pupils to feel safe and learn well. Warm and caring relationships are central to the school's approach. Pupils play happily together at social times. Bullying is extremely rare. If it did happen, pupils are confident that adults will deal with it swiftly.

Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to develop their talents and interests, for example at forest school, choir and football clubs. The farm school provides real-life experiences for pupils beyond the school gates and has been an integral feature of the school becoming an important part of the local community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the opportunities it provides for their children. Leaders have

been unfaltering in their efforts to ensure the very best opportunities and education are available for all the pupils. As a result, most pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education and life in modern Britain.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Philip Reynolds.

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 the headteacher, senior leaders, a local authority representative, a representative from the diocese, governors, pupils and parents 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 Canterbury. Its last section 48 inspection was in October 2025.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Rachel Buss

Lead inspector:

Simon Graydon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Jo Hygate, 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 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

79

Well 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: 268

School capacity

105

Well 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)

18.99%

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: 26.5%

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

7.59%

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

7.59%
Well below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Below average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	100%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	82%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	74%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	100%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	92%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	100%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	100%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	89%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	100%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	92%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

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

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

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	86%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

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

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

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	68%	-1 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	71%	80%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	83%	78%	6 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

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

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	86%	80%	6 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.1%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	12.7%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	17.8%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	20.0%	16.2%	Close to average

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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