

# Fender Primary School

**Address:** New Hey Road, Woodchurch, Wirral, Merseyside, CH49 8HB

**Unique reference number (URN):** 105039

## Inspection report: 2 June 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 ●

### Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders' vision for all pupils to be included is lived out at Fender. Leaders and staff are quick to spot pupils who may have challenges with their learning or wellbeing. This includes the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those known, or previously known, to social care and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Suitable staff training means that they are knowledgeable and empowered to help pupils overcome the barriers that they face. This support has a positive impact on pupils' success and sense of belonging.

Leaders include pupils' families in their decision-making. This includes weekly coffee mornings, parental information sessions and regular discussions around pupils' progress towards their goals. Parents and carers know that staff are vigilant in sourcing the most important help, including from external specialists, when needed.

Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND benefit from staff's high expectations. The ambitious curriculum is tailored to meet their needs. Any additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, is used very well to enhance the life chances of disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders make effective use of alternative provision as part of their overall strategies to support vulnerable pupils to learn and develop socially and emotionally.

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## Expected standard ●

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

In recent years, leaders have made a myriad of positive changes to the curriculum for all year groups and subjects. The curriculum is now well ordered, builds pupils' knowledge over time and relates to the local area. Leaders make sure that there is a sharp focus on children developing their reading, writing and number skills from their entry to the Reception Year. They monitor how well children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 build these skills and provide appropriate help for anyone who needs to catch up.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of where teaching is most effective. They use this information to share best practice with colleagues. Teachers embrace the programme of professional development. This means that they have secure subject knowledge. Typically, teachers use their knowledge to design the most appropriate learning activities for pupils. This means that, generally, pupils deepen their knowledge as they move through their learning journey at Fender.

Usually, teachers make regular checks on what pupils know. They use this information to make key adjustments and adaptations for pupils in lessons. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and any other pupils who may otherwise find

learning difficult. However, at times, teachers are less adept at offering greater challenge to deepen pupils' learning further.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have a secure and ambitious vision for children to have the best start to their educational journey. Recent changes to the curriculum focus on developing children's early language, communication and number skills effectively. The teaching of phonics is prioritised and effective. Consequently, children gain a secure knowledge of the sounds that letters make.

Clear routines and structures help children to feel happy, cared for and safe. Children behave well. They develop positive relationships with staff and their peers, showing respect, taking turns and listening to others. This helps to enhance children's wellbeing and builds their independence.

Staff design activities which help children to build their knowledge across all areas of learning. They model language well. Through their careful interactions, staff build children's vocabulary and help them to speak and listen with confidence. Staff identify any barriers children may have to their learning very quickly. They use this information to create carefully adapted learning activities for those children who face additional challenges to their achievement or wellbeing. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Generally, children achieve well by the end of the Reception Year. They are well prepared for their move into Year 1.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, including governors, have pupils' interests at the heart of every decision they make. They have a clear understanding of what is working well and an accurate insight into where further improvement is needed. They have brought about positive change to the curriculum and how it is taught, which is beginning to help pupils to achieve more than they did in the past. They have also strengthened the approach to promoting pupils' personal development, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, learn all that they should in readiness for life beyond school.

Leaders are fully attuned to the community that the school serves. They know the barriers that many pupils face to their success and they have ensured that staff are well equipped to help all pupils have an equal chance to flourish. Leaders work closely with parents and carers. Families appreciate the unwavering support they receive from staff. They are very positive about the school's work.

Governors meet their statutory duties. They are part of the fabric of school life. Governors provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge to help the school move forward on its improvement journey.

Staff are immensely proud to work with this school. They know that leaders prioritise their wellbeing and workload when they make decisions to improve aspects of school life. Staff

access a comprehensive programme of professional development to ensure that they are suitably trained to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school values are embedded in the recently strengthened programme to promote pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This programme builds on pupils' knowledge of the world around them and ensures that they learn all that they need to know to be safe and healthy. The programme is shaped well to the school's context and enables pupils to learn about and overcome some of the local risks that they may face. From the Reception Year, children are taught how to keep themselves safe in their community and when working or playing online. They learn about healthy relationships and how to be a good friend. Pupils are proud to attend Fender and display respectful and tolerant attitudes to their peers.

Pupils know about the differences that exist between themselves and others in society. They understand the need to show respect and tolerance when the beliefs of others may be different to their own. They gain an age-appropriate knowledge of fundamental British values. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Staff know pupils and their families very well. Pastoral support is a real strength of leaders' work. Staff provide a range of innovative strategies to improve pupils' wellbeing. This includes opportunities for pupils to speak freely about their feelings. If pupils encounter hurdles to their positive wellbeing they receive timely and targeted support. This includes pupils who are known, or previously known, to social care.

Leaders and staff provide a plethora of opportunities for pupils to develop their learning, talents and interests outside of the classroom. For example, pupils have weekly sessions learning outside. This helps them to build their confidence and resilience. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend the various clubs on offer, such as sports, chess, gardening and poetry club. They take on a range of leadership responsibilities and make a positive contribution to their school and their community.

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## Needs attention

### Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been below the national average by the time they leave Year 6. This is due to historical weaknesses in the curriculum.

Current pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are achieving better than they did in the past. They are learning and remembering more of what they have been taught across the curriculum. From the early years and through key stage 1, pupils are gaining essential knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, pupils can use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read and write unfamiliar words. This means that they have secure foundations for future success. Even so, some older

pupils who have not benefited from this approach have gaps in their learning. At times, this hinders them from achieving as well as they should. As a result, these pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education.

## Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders have recently prioritised improvements in how often pupils attend school. They work very closely with families to provide support for pupils to come to school regularly. In some cases, this is effective. That said, despite some recent improvements, attendance rates remain below the national average. This means that some pupils do not benefit from the education that is on offer at the school.

Leaders have very high expectations for how pupils should behave. This vision is shared by all staff. Pupils are very proud to attend Fender and they quickly rise to the challenge of meeting leaders' expectations. Lessons proceed without interruption and breaktimes are a pleasant experience for pupils who enjoy spending time with their friends. Pupils are very polite and respectful to staff, visitors and their peers. Differences are celebrated at this school. Pupils show care and compassion for each other. Discrimination and bullying are not tolerated. Staff deal with any incidents quickly, effectively and skilfully. Pupils know and appreciate this. They are free to be themselves.

Leaders make highly effective and thoughtful adaptations to the behaviour and attendance policies for any pupils who need help to meet the high standards in school.

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

Pupils at Fender benefit from a warm and personalised welcome from the moment they arrive at school in the morning. They enjoy the positive relationships they have with staff. Pupils are safe and they know they can discuss any worries they may have with staff in school. Skilled staff take the time to get to know pupils and their families. They quickly identify the barriers to learning or wellbeing that many pupils face. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), pupils who speak English as an additional language, pupils known to social care and disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are supported very well. This means that the obstacles they may have to success are reduced. Those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND thrive.

Pupils behave well. They follow the carefully designed routines and structures in place. This allows them to focus on their learning in lessons. From the Reception Year onwards, children quickly develop positive learning habits. Staff deal with any incidents of unkindness, such as bullying, quickly and effectively.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, some pupils struggle to attend daily. This means that they miss out on the positive learning experiences in school. These pupils receive support from staff to help them to attend more often.

Pupils enjoy the renewed carefully crafted curriculum. They learn increasingly well in lessons. This means that many pupils are achieving well across the curriculum. However,

due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum, some Year 6 pupils have not attained as well as others nationally in the reading, writing and mathematics tests and assessments.

Pupils develop wider knowledge of the world around them through the range of clubs and opportunities on offer. For example, athletics club, eco council, mini police and their dedicated podcast 'voices from the woodchurch'. Pupils in Year 5 develop their confidence by writing job applications, attending interviews and spending a day working in a local business.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should build on their improvements to the curriculum for teaching essential knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics so that the gaps that exist in older pupils' knowledge are reduced and their attainment improves by the end of Year 6.
  - Leaders should ensure that teachers provide the additional support and challenge that some pupils need to deepen their learning further.
  - Leaders should review and refine the procedures for tackling pupil absence so that there is sustained improvement in attendance rates for all groups of pupils.
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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sarah Ratcliffe.

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 and other staff to consider their views. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

The school has undergone considerable leadership changes since the previous inspection. A new headteacher and assistant headteacher were appointed in September 2024. The chair of governors was appointed in October 2025.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Charles Hewitt

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**Lead inspector:**

Helen Fowler, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**

Louise Atkin, Ofsted Inspector

Michelle Forrest, Ofsted Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 2 June 2026

## School and pupil context

**Total pupils**

**243**

Close to average

**What does this mean?**

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

National average: 272

**School capacity**

**262**

Close to 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)**

**62.14%**

Well above average

**What does this mean?**

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

National average: 26.3%

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

**8.23%**

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**

**36.63%**

Well above average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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)**

**Resourced provision**

**What does this mean?**

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

**Type of specialist provision (if applicable)**

**ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

**What does this mean?**

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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 | 38%         | 61%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 41%         | 62%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 31%         | 61%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 42%         | 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 | 50%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 47%         | 75%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 51%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| 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 | 50%         | 72%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 56%         | 72%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 49%         | 72%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 45%         | 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 | 50%         | 73%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 41%         | 74%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 54%         | 73%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 53%         | 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 | 37%         | 46%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 43%         | 47%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 33%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 32%         | 44%              | Close to average               |

### 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 | 48%         | 62%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 48%         | 63%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 53%         | 62%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 45%         | 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 | 45%         | 59%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 48%         | 59%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 53%         | 58%              | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 36%         | 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 | 43%         | 60%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 43%         | 61%              | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 47%         | 59%              | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 41%         | 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 | 37%         | 68%                              | -31 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (final)       | 43%         | 69%                              | -26 pp                  |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 33%         | 67%                              | -34 pp                  |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 32%         | 66%                              | -35 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 48%         | 80%                              | -31 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 48%         | 81%                              | -33 pp                  |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 53%         | 80%                              | -26 pp                  |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 45%         | 78%                              | -33 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 45%         | 78%                              | -33 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 48%         | 78%                              | -30 pp                  |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 53%         | 78%                              | -24 pp                  |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 36%         | 77%                              | -41 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 43%         | 80%                              | -36 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (final)</b>       | 43%         | 81%                              | -37 pp                  |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 47%         | 79%                              | -33 pp                  |

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 (final) | 41%         | 79%                              | -38 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) | 11.1%       | 5.2%             | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 9.9%        | 5.5%             | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 10.0%       | 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) | 36.8%       | 13.0%            | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 36.6%       | 14.6%            | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 37.2%       | 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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