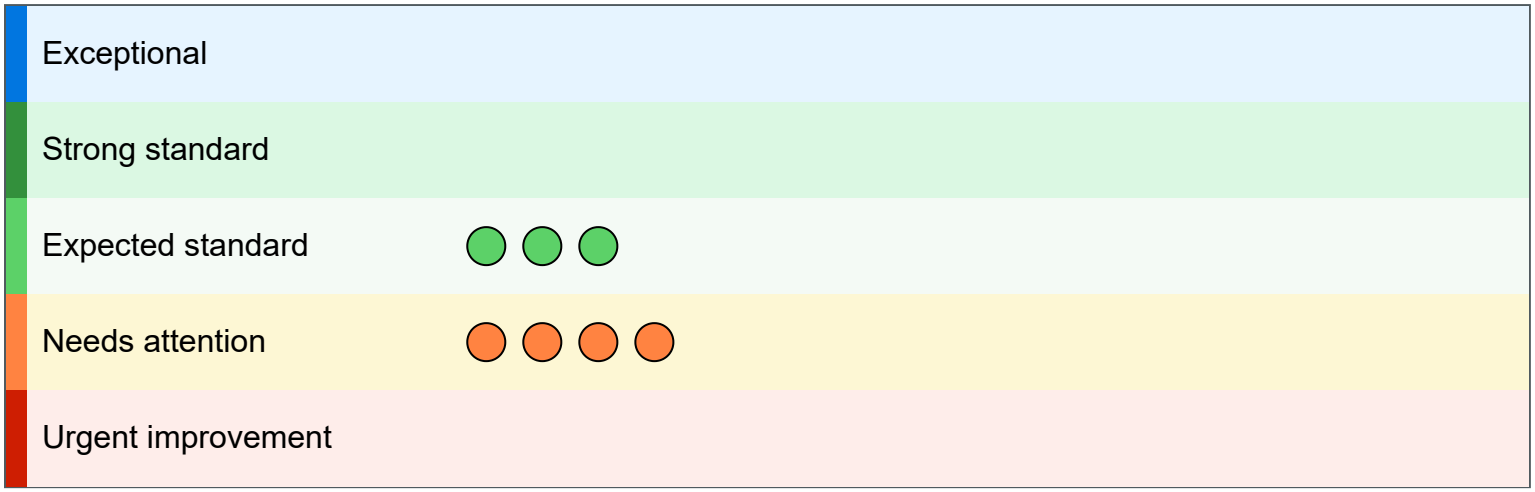
Dovecot Primary School

Address: Grant Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L14 0LH

Unique reference number (URN): 130296

Inspection report: 7 July 2026



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

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders are knowledgeable about the early years and prioritise giving children a positive start to their school life. They use their understanding to provide a broad, well-organised curriculum that is designed to provide children with knowledge and skills that they need for their future learning.

Leaders ensure that the early years curriculum is taught well. Teachers place an emphasis on the development of early communication and language skills. They interact consistently with children to model the language they want them to use. Staff extend children's vocabulary and prompt them to choose words carefully, when speaking and writing sentences. Staff teach phonics consistently well. Children use their phonics knowledge to read with increasing accuracy. Teachers provide opportunities during the school day for children to practise the things they have been learning. As a result, children develop the language and vocabulary they need to communicate with increasing confidence. They develop the early mathematical knowledge they need to count fluently. Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are prepared well for the transition to Year 1.

Leaders ensure that care practices are appropriate. Children are happy and safe. They develop the social skills they need to get along with their classmates.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have identified that some pupils face multiple barriers to their learning. Leaders prioritise working with parents and carers to gain a secure understanding of each pupil. When necessary, leaders draw on the advice of external agencies to ensure that any barriers are reduced effectively.

Leaders use additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, to support disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that staff have the expertise they need to identify and support pupils, who need extra help with their language and communication skills. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils also receive extra help to develop their phonics knowledge when needed. As a result, disadvantaged pupils typically develop the phonics knowledge they need to read with increasing accuracy.

Leaders ensure that staff are trained to identify and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes supporting pupils to recognise and manage their emotions during the school day. Staff have identified that some pupils have sensory needs. They provide them with the support they need to feel secure. This enables pupils to be calm and ready to learn.

Leaders work with external professionals to ensure that pupils, who are known to social care, receive the pastoral and academic support they need.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders use their understanding of the school's context to provide a coherent programme of personal development. They enhance the curriculum with well-considered activities, such as residential trips, where pupils learn to work together and overcome challenges. Pupils take part in art workshops, experience trips to the theatre and perform in the school choir. Leaders organise workshops, where pupils share their computing knowledge with older members of the community. Pupils learn about possible careers from a range of local employers. These activities broaden pupils' experiences and raise their aspirations. Pupils develop an understanding of the faiths and cultures that make up their school and local community. This helps prepare them for life beyond school.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships at an age-appropriate level. They understand the principle of consent and how their bodies change as they get older. Leaders ensure that online safety is embedded in the curriculum. Pupils learn to recognise scams and understand the dangers associated with clicking on unknown links and sharing personal information. Leaders organise sessions on crime reduction and civic responsibility. Pupils learn about the dangers of open water, how to cycle safely and how to cross the road with care. These activities help pupils learn how to stay safe in their local community.

Leaders ensure that fundamental British values are woven through the curriculum. Pupils understand that some groups of people are protected from discrimination by the law. Pupils learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are knowledgeable about strategies that support positive mental health. Leaders provide comprehensive pastoral support for pupils and their families. Pupils know where to find help if they need it.

Leaders make sure that every aspect of the school's personal development offer is open to all groups of pupils, including those facing disadvantage and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Although pupils learn well in some subjects, they do not typically build the key knowledge and skills they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. For example, pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and they do not develop the skills they need to write with fluency across the curriculum. This is reflected in below-average attainment in national assessments at the end of key stage 2, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' attainment in the Year 4 multiplication times table check is also below the national average.

Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved steadily over time and is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils use their phonics knowledge effectively to read with increasing confidence and enjoyment across the curriculum.

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

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Leaders have a detailed understanding of attendance and behaviour across the school. They take action to reduce any barriers to positive attendance. However, attendance remains consistently below the national average. Leaders communicate the importance of positive attendance to parents and carers. They follow attendance closely and identify pupils whose absence is becoming a cause for concern. Leaders work with families to reduce barriers and they coordinate the work of external agencies to provide wider support when needed. In some cases, this work has led to improved attendance for individual pupils. However, levels of persistent absence remain high with little sign of improvement over time.

Pupils follow the school's well-established rules and routines. They generally behave well and engage with learning. However, there are times when some pupils do not participate well in lessons. Staff apply rules consistently and treat pupils fairly, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. When behaviour does not meet expectations, staff help pupils to think about their actions and make amends when they need to. This contributes to a calm and orderly environment across the school.

Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying. They trust staff to deal with any issues effectively. Suspension is considered carefully and used appropriately.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders understand the quality of curriculum and teaching across the school. However, they have not acted swiftly enough to bring about the improvements that are needed. As a result, there are inconsistencies in teaching that have a negative impact on pupils' achievement. For example, teachers do not use assessment well enough to check pupils' understanding and provide them with the information they need to improve their work. Added to that, some learning activities are not matched well enough to the curriculum content. Leaders do not ensure that teachers prioritise the closing of gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving on to teach new concepts. This includes the key knowledge that pupils need in mathematics and writing.

In contrast, leaders' actions have brought about improvements in the design of the curriculum. The curriculum is well organised and structured to build pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders' work has led to phonics being taught consistently well across the school. Leaders ensure that staff understand how to adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention

Leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. However, they do not deal with weaknesses in the school quickly or effectively enough. Leaders do not ensure that staff have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. When pupils do not engage with lessons, leaders do not ensure that there is a sharp enough focus on pupils

catching up on learning that has been missed. Additionally, leaders do not ensure that teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify misconceptions in pupils' work.

Governors are supporting the school through a turbulent period. They are particularly mindful of the wellbeing and workload of leaders and staff. However, they do not challenge leaders sufficiently on matters relating to the curriculum and teaching. As a result, pupils do not receive the quality of teaching that they need to achieve well.

Leaders provide staff with a programme of professional learning designed to develop expertise across all areas of their work. Teachers have access to national qualifications and work extensively with their local network of schools. Leaders provide opportunities for staff to visit other schools and learn from good practice. Leaders and governors are committed to building partnerships with the community. They ensure that the school plays a central role in supporting local families. For example, the school hosts city-wide events that provide valuable information, advice and support.

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

Pupils benefit from the broad curriculum provided by the school. They enjoy learning and talk with understanding and enthusiasm about the things they have learned. Pupils learn to read and benefit from the wide range of books available. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive support to reduce their barriers to learning. They typically make appropriate progress through the curriculum.

Pupils build positive relationships with staff. They respond to the respectful way they are treated by showing respect in return. Pupils make friendships and are happy spending time together. In breakfast club, pupils get along well in mixed-age groups. Pupils are safe and generally behave well. Any incidents of derogatory language or bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

Pupils typically settle quickly into the school day. However, some pupils do not attend as often as they should and some pupils arrive late. As a result, they miss important learning and fall behind. Some pupils have gaps in their learning, which means that they are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they should be.

Pupils are involved in all aspects of school life. Older pupils act as prefects and set a good example for younger pupils. They vote to appoint school councillors, who represent their views. Pupils benefit from a range of activities that extend their development beyond the classroom. For example, outdoor learning sessions and swimming help develop pupils' resilience and teamwork skills. Activities such as gardening, cookery and photography broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils learn to play chess and some represent the school in large chess tournaments. Visits to places of interest, such as the zoo, enhance pupils' knowledge of the world around them.

Next steps

- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, should ensure that when an area of the school's work falls below the expected standard, particularly in curriculum and teaching, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to provide pupils with the feedback they need to improve their work and achieve well.
- Leaders should ensure that staff have high expectations for all groups of pupils and focus sharply on closing gaps in pupils' knowledge so that pupils can access the curriculum and achieve well.
- Leaders should continue to work with families to reduce barriers and improve attendance, particularly for those taking holidays in term time.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Christine Nurse.

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 and other senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils in the school during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Headteacher: Karen Barr

Lead inspector:
Chris Fielding, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Rebecca Gough, Ofsted Inspector
Rachael Alarcon, 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 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

189
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

236
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)

65.48%
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: 26.3%

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

3.17%
Close to 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

17.99%
Above 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)

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	31%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	25%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	22%	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	38%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	33%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	46%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	42%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	64%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	38%	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)	38%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	41%	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	26%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	22%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	21%	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	34%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	33%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	24%	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	40%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	39%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	53%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	34%	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	44%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	28%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	73%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	38%	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	26%	68%	-42 pp
2024/25 (final)	22%	69%	-47 pp
2023/24 (final)	40%	67%	-27 pp
2022/23 (final)	21%	66%	-46 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	34%	80%	-46 pp
2024/25 (final)	33%	81%	-47 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	80%	-26 pp
2022/23 (final)	24%	78%	-54 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	40%	78%	-37 pp
2024/25 (final)	39%	78%	-39 pp
2023/24 (final)	53%	78%	-24 pp
2022/23 (final)	34%	77%	-43 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	44%	80%	-36 pp
2024/25 (final)	28%	81%	-53 pp
2023/24 (final)	73%	79%	-6 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	79%	-41 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)	7.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.8%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	8.6%	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)	25.2%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	22.8%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	31.5%	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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