

Burston Community Primary School

Address: Crown Green, Burston, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 5TZ

Unique reference number (URN): 144427

Inspection report: 6 May 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 ●

Leaders analyse attendance data at individual, school and trust levels to inform their decisions. This enables them to identify patterns and barriers to attendance early. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies. They intervene promptly when needed, to ensure that pupils' attendance improves rapidly. This approach has had considerable impact on pupils' attendance. There is no persistent absence this year because of leaders' swift actions. Pupils have a firm understanding of the importance of attending school regularly.

Leaders have created a highly conducive culture for learning, characterised by pupils' strong self-discipline and consistently positive attitudes in lessons. High expectations are rooted in shared values rather than formal rules. Pupils understand clearly what these mean in practice. The school fosters a calm and focused learning environment. Pupils concentrate well in lessons. They reflect the shared values that shape leaders' expectations. These well-understood principles encourage pupils to demonstrate motivation, ambition, resilience and kindness. As the environment is friendly and welcoming, pupils feel safe. They understand what bullying is but say that it does not occur. They know that staff will resolve any issues promptly. Positive relationships with staff enable pupils to share concerns openly. Support systems help them to manage their own behaviour. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff understand each pupil's needs in detail. By knowing every pupil well, staff identify pupils' specific strengths and where further support is needed to help them reach their next steps. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' achievement and wellbeing. This approach enables them to identify emerging needs quickly, remove barriers to learning and adapt support promptly.

Leaders support disadvantaged pupils effectively. They use additional funding carefully to meet identified barriers to learning and/or wellbeing. This targeted support has a positive impact on pupils' progress and wellbeing. Leaders check this closely to ensure that funding makes a meaningful difference.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive timely, well-matched support. This helps pupils to thrive academically and socially. Staff work closely with the trust and external professionals to secure training and additional support when needed. Pupils with SEND explain confidently what makes them unique. They understand how staff support them to overcome any barriers they face and develop their independence in learning.

Leaders thoroughly understand pupils' additional needs. They provide consistent strategies for staff to use during the school day. This ensures continuity of support for pupils. Leaders design the curriculum carefully to allow adaptation across mixed-age classes. They use alternative or targeted provision appropriately. These actions reflect a firm belief that every pupil can succeed.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and context. They approach the benefits and challenges of small-school leadership positively and manage change and workload effectively. Underpinned by the trust's vision, leaders prioritise improvement actions that directly benefit pupils. Plans for further improvement are appropriately targeted.

Governance is effective. Trustees understand the school's performance accurately. Rigorous quality assurance informs their work. Trustees provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge. The trust supports leaders professionally and places confidence in them. This strengthens accountability and culture.

Leaders prioritise staff's wellbeing. Staff value leaders' actions to reduce their workload. Leaders model positive behaviours that foster respectful relationships. There are opportunities across the trust for networking and to learn from other schools and practitioners. Professional development focuses on the right priorities. Purposeful and well-designed induction supports new staff effectively to ensure continuity of provision.

The school maintains effective partnerships with families and the wider community. Leaders' open-door approach and staff's availability ensure that any concerns from parents and carers are addressed quickly. As a result, parents express high levels of trust in the school, and all would recommend it.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Leaders take a strategic and highly effective approach to supporting pupils' personal development and wellbeing. They have established a culture that fosters pupils' physical and mental wellbeing and character development. This is evident in pupils' attitudes, confidence and ambition for themselves and others.

The personal development programme supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. Pupils have a secure understanding of diversity and do not tolerate discrimination. They value difference and recognise the importance of inclusion. Pupils talk confidently about a range of diverse role models who have overcome barriers and discrimination. They reflect on how this knowledge helps them to overcome their own challenges. Pupils welcome new pupils to their school so that they feel valued and included.

Relationships education and health education are suitable and effective. Pupils understand how to keep themselves healthy, happy and safe. They explain how they identify online and offline risks to their wellbeing. Pupils demonstrate an intrinsic understanding of respectful decision-making and know where to seek help and support. They recognise that others may not always share their values when they are away from school, but they understand their role as positive influencers in these situations.

Pupils develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values through meaningful experiences. They respect other people and have a marked sense of citizenship. Pupils aspire highly for their future lives and careers, such as becoming a Royal Air Force pilot, a women's footballer or a horse rider. They feel inspired by former pupils.

Personal development provision meets the needs of all pupils. High-quality pastoral support, including daily check-ins, ensures that pupils feel secure and well supported. Pupils appreciate the opportunities that staff provide through trips and partnerships, including visits to the local secondary school and local events. Pupils are responsible citizens. They make a positive difference to road safety and the local environment through their work as school councillors and eco-councillors.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils develop secure knowledge and skills across the breadth of the curriculum. The small number of pupils on roll means that published data does not provide a reliable picture of achievement across the school. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils make steady progress from their starting points, including in reading, writing and mathematics. On some occasions, pupils do not apply consistent standards of English across subjects. Leaders have identified this and have started to take action to improve pupils' written accuracy, including in spelling.

With appropriate adaptations, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress alongside their peers and develop secure knowledge and skills. Pupils prepare well for their next steps, with growing confidence and independence. Children in the early years get off to a positive start and are well prepared for future learning in Year 1.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders take a strategic approach to curriculum design. They have developed a cohesive curriculum that supports learning effectively in mixed-age classes. Typically, staff teach the curriculum well. They adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. Leaders evaluate the quality of the curriculum and teaching accurately and refine these as needed.

Leaders prioritise building the important knowledge and skills that pupils need in reading, writing and mathematics. This enables pupils to learn well across the curriculum. Staff adapt learning effectively to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in accessing the curriculum. These pupils make secure progress. Staff place reading at the centre of learning in the early years and key stage 1. In the main, they check pupils' learning carefully to quickly identify any gaps in their knowledge. Staff use this information to provide additional support promptly. However, from time to time, staff do not consistently identify some of the errors that pupils make in their written work, including in spelling. This means that these errors sometimes go unaddressed.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement. They provide opportunities for pupils to revisit and revise previous learning. This helps pupils to remember important knowledge. Leaders ensure that new staff understand the agreed curriculum approaches to secure consistency in teaching. However, in some subjects, teachers do not choose the most

appropriate ways to teach the intended curriculum. This occasionally limits the depth of some pupils' knowledge.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children make a positive start in the early years. Reception-age children learn in a shared early years and key stage 1 class. Leaders organise staffing carefully to ensure high-quality care and teaching. Leadership in the early years supports children's learning and wellbeing effectively. Children benefit from positive role models in older year groups. They settle quickly and follow routines confidently.

Leaders have designed the early years curriculum to successfully build children's knowledge and skills. Staff deliver the curriculum well. They regularly check children's learning to identify any gaps in their knowledge. When this is the case, staff provide timely support. For example, children who need extra practice to secure their fine motor and early writing skills benefit from purposeful guidance.

Staff ensure that children develop their communication and language skills well. They provide children with high-quality interactions, introducing new words to build children's vocabulary. Staff encourage children to speak clearly and listen carefully to others. Children learn to work and play well together. Staff teach the phonics programme well. This enables children to apply their literacy skills across different areas of learning. Staff know children well and adapt learning carefully to meet children's individual needs. Consequently, children make positive progress from their starting points and build secure foundations for future learning. They are well prepared for key stage 1.

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

Pupils are at the centre of this small and caring school. They, and the school, have mighty ambitions. Pupils are encouraged to make their mark by being motivated, ambitious, resilient and kind. These values permeate through the school and shape the relationships between staff, pupils and parents and carers. Pupils are eager to learn and settle quickly at the start of the day because of familiar routines.

Pupils experience a curriculum that has been well considered and designed to meet the needs of mixed-age classes. Staff reduce any barriers to learning that pupils may face. Typically, pupils achieve well from their starting points. They remember important knowledge and are ready for their next steps.

Pupils' wellbeing is as important as their academic achievement. Leaders provide a high level of care and support. This builds pupils' confidence and encourages them to be brave and try new things. Pupils are proud of their local community. They learn how to contribute to their locality through links with the parish council and other local groups. Through these experiences, pupils learn about the importance of citizenship and fundamental British values. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and towards their learning. They show respect for one another, and older pupils act as role models for their younger peers. All pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities and contribute to school and community life. Pupils trust adults to help them if they need it. Staff deal with any bullying swiftly and effectively. Pupils also learn to resolve difficulties for themselves. They demonstrate empathy and learn to negotiate and compromise, so that everyone is happy and safe. Pupils are excited to come to school to see their friends and teachers. They do not want to miss out on any learning or the rich experiences that leaders provide. As a result, pupils attend school regularly.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to support staff to refine teaching approaches and their use of resources, so that pupils build a deep body of subject knowledge across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff consistently identify errors in pupils' written work, including in spelling, so that they can address these swiftly and consistently.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Sapientia Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jonathan Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter Rout.

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 executive headteacher, the head of school and other school leaders during the inspection. They also spoke with representatives of the trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Executive Headteacher: Karen Millar

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Alastair Heath-Robinson, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

25

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: 272

School capacity

70

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)

8.00%

Well below 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

4.00%

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

28.00%

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

Close to 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	25%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	73%	S

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	33%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	72%	S
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	71%	S

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)	S	74%	S
2023/24 (final)	33%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	S	73%	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

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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
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		62%	
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
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		60%	
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
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)	5.5%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	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)	23.1%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	26.8%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	21.9%	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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