

Poplars Community Primary School

Address: St Margaret's Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4HN

Unique reference number (URN): 145541

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders consistently place a high focus on ensuring pupils attend school regularly. They monitor attendance information rigorously and understand why some pupils struggle to attend consistently. When this happens, leaders provide effective support for pupils and their families. Where necessary, they implement effective personalised programmes, including soft starts and individualised help. As a result, attendance for these pupils improves quickly. Their confidence and engagement also increase greatly. Overall absence and persistent absence have remained consistently below national averages. This reflects leaders' commitment to ensuring that pupils feel safe, valued and happy at school. Leaders strive to make learning engaging and enjoyable, which helps pupils to attend regularly.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour and consistently model appropriate conduct. As a result, behaviour across the school is extremely positive in lessons and during social times. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils understand leaders' expectations and meet them consistently. The school does not tolerate discrimination or bullying. Such incidents are extremely rare. Leaders monitor behaviour patterns carefully and provide timely support when needed. Appropriate adaptations help pupils manage their behaviour and develop independence. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are keen to meet the high expectations set for them.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Leaders continue to refine and improve the early years curriculum. It is organised carefully and aligned closely to children's developmental needs. Leaders have a strong understanding of early childhood development. This helps to ensure that teaching is effective and purposeful. As children move through Nursery and the Reception Year, leaders ensure that the knowledge and skills they learn are secure and meaningful.

Children thrive in the early years environment. It is inclusive and stimulating. Children, including disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, begin to develop the core skills they need in language, reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders provide frequent opportunities for children to practise and apply this knowledge across the learning environment.

Staff check learning frequently and use this information to adapt their teaching when needed. Leaders and staff identify barriers to learning or wellbeing quickly. Leaders ensure that children receive timely support and monitor its impact closely.

Staff engage children in high-quality interactions that deepen their understanding across all areas of learning. For example, children explored animals and ice while discussing how cold conditions in the Arctic affect the animals that live there. Experiences such as these help children broaden their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways.

Staff take time to know each child and their family well. They establish positive and trusting relationships from the outset. Routines are embedded securely. Children feel safe and happy. They progress rapidly from their starting points. This prepares them well for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a highly inclusive culture where pupils, staff and families feel welcome and valued. As a result, pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and pupils known to social care, are able to achieve and thrive. This is a significant strength of the school.

Robust systems and effective processes ensure that pupils' needs are identified accurately and at the earliest opportunity. These approaches are embedded and underpin the school's work. Staff understand them very well. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained to reduce or remove barriers to learning. Staff have the knowledge and expertise needed to support pupils with SEND and those who face additional barriers to learning effectively.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to strengthen the support available for pupils. They maintain rigorous oversight of provision for pupils who need additional support. Staff adapt their approaches and respond effectively to pupils' changing needs. These adaptations help pupils to access learning as independently as possible. This prepares them very well for secondary school. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to secure a collaborative and well-informed approach.

Leaders have detailed knowledge of the challenges disadvantaged pupils might face. They use the latest research to help inform how best to spend the additional funding they receive. Alternative provision is used appropriately to support pupils' needs.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

The school has experienced a recent period of leadership change. Leaders understand the school's strengths and the areas that require further improvement. They have successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

Leaders have raised expectations for attendance and behaviour and have strengthened the school's inclusive practice further. As a result, attendance is now above average and behaviour incidents have reduced considerably. Support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is highly effective.

Staff receive high-quality training that aligns with school priorities. Leaders plan this training carefully across the year to ensure that staff receive support that meets their needs. Staff benefit from this training. For example, it helps to build their confidence and strengthen their subject knowledge. Leaders also provide opportunities for staff to work with colleagues across the trust. For example, network meetings allow leaders to share expertise and effective practice.

The trust fulfils its statutory duties with care and rigour. Trustees are knowledgeable and strategic. They hold leaders to account very effectively. For example, they maintain oversight of safeguarding, equality and attendance and ensure that systems remain

effective. Governors are actively involved in the school and provide effective support and challenge.

The trust and school leaders ensure that staff feel valued and supported. Staff speak positively about the professional development they receive and the impact it has on their work. Leaders are mindful of workload and wellbeing. Staff are highly complimentary about the care and support leaders provide.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders have established effective systems to promote pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This begins with the positive relationships they build with pupils. This is particularly important for pupils who face additional barriers to learning. For example, staff quickly identify pupils who need pastoral support. This close care and attention benefit pupils greatly. As a result, pupils receive timely support that improves their attendance, behaviour and mental health.

Pupils develop secure knowledge through the personal, social and health education programme. They can explain clearly how to stay safe online, including the importance of not sharing personal images. They know how to block and report inappropriate behaviour online and where to seek help. Pupils develop secure knowledge of healthy relationships, personal safety and healthy lifestyles. Leaders consider the school's local context. For example, pupils learn about water safety because the school is close to the coast and to the Norfolk Broads.

Pupils are confident, resilient and reflective. They understand that families can be different. They know that everyone should be treated with kindness and respect. The school's values are taught explicitly. This focused support helps pupils to continually develop a positive character.

Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of wider curriculum enrichment. Leaders track participation carefully to ensure that all pupils can take part. Clubs, performances and leadership opportunities help pupils develop their interests and ambitions. Staff adapt learning effectively for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps them access the programme fully and benefit from wider opportunities.

Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values through discussions and debates across the curriculum. Pupils speak confidently about the importance of equality and that it is okay to be an individual. They learn about different beliefs and religions. This helps them to be respectful and tolerant of different faiths. They are being prepared very well for life in modern Britain.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress suitably from their starting points. This has improved recently because leaders have refined the quality of the reading, writing and mathematics curriculums.

Pupils' achievement in key stage 2 national assessments for reading, writing and mathematics has improved over the past 2 years. For example, combined reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average in 2023 but was above the national average in 2025. However, historically, fewer pupils have reached the higher standard compared to the national averages.

Achievement in the Year 4 multiplication tables check and the Year 1 phonics screening check has been positive over the last 3 years. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. As a result, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally continues to narrow.

Across the curriculum, pupils gain a broad range of knowledge and skills. They learn and remember important content over time. This helps them to begin to apply what they know across subjects. Most pupils are prepared appropriately for their next steps.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have strengthened the curriculum. It is now appropriately sequenced across subjects and year groups. Leaders have provided detailed overviews for each unit of work. Clear endpoints help pupils to build knowledge over time. Staff make appropriate adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps the pupils to access their learning successfully.

Leaders place a strong focus on developing pupils' core skills in vocabulary, reading, writing and mathematics. For example, children learn and practise letter formation in the early years. By Year 1, most pupils write accurately in sentences using a cursive handwriting style.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn to read through a systematic phonics programme. This approach is implemented consistently and helps pupils to develop secure decoding skills and reading fluency.

Teachers have the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff regularly check what pupils know and understand. They provide same-day support that helps pupils keep up with their learning. More focused support is provided when pupils have specific gaps in their learning. This is particularly effective in early reading. Staff provide additional support quickly, which helps pupils improve their reading fluency. However, at times, learning is not adapted precisely enough. As a result, some pupils do not build on their prior learning as well as they could.

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

Pupils enjoy school and take pride in their learning. They talk confidently about what they have learned, including in history, science and mathematics. Older pupils explain previous learning with increasing clarity and can describe why it is important. National assessments show that achievement has improved steadily in recent years. Most pupils now achieve close to national averages by the end of key stage 2 with additional strengths in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the Year 4 multiplication tables check.

Pupils experience an ambitious curriculum that is usually taught well. Teachers check what pupils know and understand effectively. They identify misconceptions and provide support so that pupils keep up with their learning. Pupils develop secure knowledge in reading, handwriting, spelling and mathematics from an early age.

Staff identify pupils who face barriers to learning quickly and provide timely support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils, pupils known to social care and those facing additional challenges are supported very well. Leaders monitor the impact of this support closely and adapt provision when needs change. As a result, the pupils typically progress well from their starting points. They participate fully in school life.

Pupils feel included and valued. They build positive relationships with staff and with one another. They benefit from a broad range of opportunities, including clubs, performances, educational visits and experiences linked closely to the curriculum. These help pupils to develop confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils also develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They learn how to contribute positively to their school, local community and life in modern Britain.

Pupils behave extremely well. They understand the school rules and follow them consistently in lessons and during social times. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that adults deal with their concerns quickly and effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils regularly attend school each day. Attendance figures have remained above national averages over time.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information more precisely to adapt learning so that pupils have more frequent opportunities to securely build on their prior knowledge across all subjects.
- Leaders should continue to improve pupils' attainment so that a greater proportion reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

About this inspection

This school is part of Evolution Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer

(CEO), Dr Craig Avieson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Drew Whitehead.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, including the headteacher, pupils and parents. They also spoke with representatives of the trust and trustees during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The acting headteacher started in post in April 2026.

The school currently makes use of 2 registered alternative provisions.

Acting headteacher: Ashley Cunningham

Lead inspector:

Benjamin Axon, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Tim Leah, Ofsted Inspector

Carolyn Ellis-Gage, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

277

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

598

Well above 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)

52.71%

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

3.97%

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

23.10%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

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

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	53%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	79%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	60%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	30%	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	70%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	83%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	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	63%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	42%	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	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	49%	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	48%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	56%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	24%	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	64%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	69%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	51%	60%	Close to average

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	57%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	67%	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	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	83%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	72%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	44%	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	48%	68%	-20 pp
2024/25 (final)	75%	69%	6 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	67%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	24%	66%	-42 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	64%	80%	-15 pp
2024/25 (final)	79%	81%	-2 pp
2023/24 (final)	69%	80%	-10 pp
2022/23 (final)	51%	78%	-27 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	57%	78%	-21 pp
2024/25 (final)	79%	78%	1 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (final)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	72%	79%	-8 pp
2022/23 (final)	44%	79%	-35 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)	3.4%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	6.1%	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)	4.0%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.4%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	17.7%	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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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