

# Acre Rigg Infant School

Address: Acre Rigg Road, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 2DU

Unique reference number (URN): 114154

## Inspection report: 12 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 have a rigorous approach to improving attendance. As a result, pupil attendance is improving, and for some groups it is above national comparators. Leaders ensure that parents, carers and pupils are clear about why high attendance matters. Leaders challenge parents with tenacity about attendance, using a range of approaches. They do all they can to support parents, carers and pupils in removing any barriers to high attendance. As a result, most pupils who were persistently absent last year now attend school regularly.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school, both in lessons and at playtimes, is consistently positive. Routines are embedded. Pupils respond well to staff and interact well with each other. Pupils feel safe and report that bullying or unkindness is very rare. If it does occur, pupils are confident that staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. Pupils behave well in their lessons. Staff make well-judged adaptations for pupils who need additional support to regulate their behaviour and maintain focus. Across the school, pupils demonstrate highly impressive attitudes to their learning. Most pupils take pride in their work. The school promotes positive behaviour through assemblies and a reward system. Pupils earn 'gems' for demonstrating attribute 'powers' such as resilience, independence and kindness. The youngest children in early years cooperate well with each other, take turns and happily share resources.

### Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion is prioritised by all staff. Leaders value and welcome all pupils, regardless of need. Before they start at the school, leaders ensure pupils' needs are carefully assessed so that appropriate support can be provided immediately on arrival. Leaders seek appropriate specialist advice to precisely identify barriers to learning. This is used to ensure that pupils receive the precise support they need to access their learning and thrive emotionally. Pupils' learning plans are carefully crafted to ensure that the steps needed to support them are clear for staff to follow. These plans are regularly and rigorously reviewed and adapted to ensure the progress pupils make against their targets is maximised.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and those known or previously known to children's social care. Whatever their starting points, pupils are all helped to acquire the foundational knowledge they need to read, write and communicate. Leaders ensure that staff have effective training that enables them to use effective strategies for pupils who need additional support. They provide appropriate resources to help pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers.

Leaders use the additional funds allocated for pupils who are disadvantaged to implement evidence-based approaches that help them to keep up with their peers. These funds are also used to broaden pupils' experiences, including providing access to after-school clubs and educational visits.

Parents are consistently positive about the support their children with SEND receive. They recognise that this support improves their children's general wellbeing.

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## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically achieve well. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have the knowledge they need to be ready for their move to junior school. On the whole, pupils acquire appropriate reading knowledge and skills. As a result, the proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening check is close to the national average. Most pupils who did not pass the phonics screening check in Year 1 largely secure the knowledge they need to pass this by the end of Year 2. In mathematics, pupils develop a secure understanding of number. They use their knowledge to solve age-appropriate mathematical problems.

Across the curriculum, pupils recall their prior learning and make links with their new learning. For example, they are knowledgeable about rivers, continents and different countries around the world. They remember key facts about the Great Fire of London. Pupils also develop their artistic skills. Artwork displayed around the school demonstrates that they achieve well in this subject.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make secure progress with their learning from their starting points.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed the curriculum to ensure that it sets out the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to know from Nursery to the end of Year 2. Across the curriculum, pupils enjoy a range of practical approaches to secure learning. Pupils who need additional support are provided with carefully chosen adaptations. As a result, they can access the learning and secure progress.

Leaders ensure that phonics is taught with precision. Staff ensure that pupils engage well in their reading sessions. They quickly address any mistakes pupils make. Pupils show confidence in how to segment and blend unfamiliar words. They are provided with a mix of phonetically decodable and non-decodable books to support their reading fluency development. However, this sometimes makes it difficult for pupils at the early stage of learning to read so they can practise the sounds they have learned. Consequently, not all pupils are gaining fluency and confidence in their reading as quickly as they could.

Pupils typically learn to form their letters accurately, develop their spelling and become numerate. Leaders have recently focused on ensuring that pupils use an efficient pencil grip. However, staff do not consistently remind pupils to hold their pencils correctly. This sometimes has a negative impact on pupils' ability to write fluently and accurately.

In mathematics, staff carefully structure their teaching by providing pupils with clear examples and step-by-step guidance. This enables pupils to apply their newly acquired skills

and knowledge independently and with accuracy.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Early years leaders have created an inspiring and well-resourced environment. This encourages children to be imaginative and creative. Staff welcome children warmly and ensure that they have a calm start to the day. Children quickly settle and take joy in their learning. Leaders ensure that the welfare needs of 2-year-olds are carefully considered. Their emotional needs are met by caring staff. Children feel safe and respond well to the nurturing relationships established by staff.

Leaders have developed an ambitious and detailed curriculum that maps out the key stories, songs and vocabulary they want children to learn. Across early years, children are supported to develop their communication and language through high-quality interactions with staff. Children typically have low starting points. Staff deliberately model language and introduce vocabulary in a structured way. This helps children to develop their language over time. In the Nursery, children are exposed to rhythm and rhyme to lay the foundations for reading. Children in the Reception Year benefit from the precise teaching of phonics. Staff routinely check children's understanding and provide immediate support if they fall behind. They ensure that children are immersed in stories. Children love to act these out throughout the day.

Leaders ensure that partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies are particularly positive. Parents feel involved and well informed. Staff ensure that children are known to them before they start school, which helps them to settle quickly.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school well and understand both its strengths and the areas that need more work. Leaders at all levels are supported to effectively monitor the impact of actions taken to improve the school. Leaders set high expectations and model the school's values in all they do. This creates a positive culture.

Governors are knowledgeable about their statutory duties, which they meet with care and confidence. They know the school well and carefully check progress against actions identified to address the school's priorities. Governors challenge leaders appropriately. They make sure that systems and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. Governors regularly visit the school and are well known to staff and pupils.

Leaders and governors make decisions that put pupils first, including those who face additional barriers. They have a strong moral purpose that spreads to the staff. Staff benefit from a well-planned programme of professional development, which strengthens their subject and pedagogical knowledge. Leaders and governors are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing. Staff, parents and carers are very positive about the school. Leaders have established highly effective relationships with parents. They provide support to parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, so that the needs of their children are met effectively and consistently.

Leaders have planned a coherent and relevant programme for pupils' personal development and wellbeing. This is delivered through assemblies and carefully planned lessons. Pupils understand the importance of working hard in school to be able to have a job later in life. They begin exploring possible careers by meeting members of the police and fire services and staff from the local library.

Staff teach the importance of tolerance and respect for everyone, including those with different backgrounds. They learn about a range of faiths and cultures. This work is supported by visits from local religious leaders. However, some pupils struggle to recall what they have learned beyond Christianity.

Children who join the school are welcomed without exception and settle quickly. Pupils understand the importance of rules and know that they are there to protect them. They learn about the dangers in the community and know how to make good choices to keep themselves safe. For example, they practise crossing the road safely. Through the content in personal, social and health education, pupils recognise what makes a healthy relationship. Pupils know how to maintain their physical and mental health. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to become specialists in a range of strategies to meet pupils' pastoral and mental health needs. This enables pupils to receive the support they need promptly.

Leaders have significantly increased the range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors to the school. Pupils enjoy attending the baking club, yoga, dance, sports and arts clubs. Leaders rigorously track participation and ensure that pupils with vulnerabilities are encouraged to attend. Adaptations are provided, where needed, so that all pupils can attend. Pupils take on various leadership roles. For example, they represent their class on the school council. As part of this role, pupils help to improve the activities available at playtimes.

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

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the Acre Rigg Infant School family. They are known to all staff, who care deeply about their learning and their social and emotional needs. Relationships between pupils and staff are consistently positive. As a result, pupils feel safe, cared for and happy.

Pupils behave consistently well in lessons, around school and in the playground. They are almost always kind to each other. Pupils say bullying is rare and, if it happens, staff deal with it swiftly. New pupils settle quickly into school and are warmly accepted by others. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors and are excited to explain their learning. They show high levels of respect for each other and take turns to share their ideas and experiences. Children in early years show high levels of independence, curiosity and fascination. They engage well with a rich, carefully planned environment that helps them to develop the key knowledge they need to be ready for Year 1.

Pupils typically achieve well. They benefit from a carefully planned curriculum that helps them to develop the basic skills they need to progress to the next stages of their education.

From the start of their time in the school, pupils are expertly provided with the support they need to make progress from their different starting points. Barriers to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are swiftly identified. They receive a precise and high-quality programme of support to help them to catch up with their peers.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of carefully planned enrichment activities that enhance their experiences. For example, they go to the seaside to learn about coasts and how to play safely by the sea. Pupils also learn about how to keep themselves safe online and when out and about in the community. They have an age-appropriate knowledge of fundamental British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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## Next steps

- Leaders should further embed the teaching of handwriting so that pupils consistently use an efficient pencil grip and form their letters and numbers correctly.
  - Leaders should ensure that pupils who are still at the early stage of learning to read are supported to catch up swiftly by consistently providing books that allow pupils to precisely practise and embed their phonics knowledge.
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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Reverend Elaine Edith Jones.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, some governors, including the chair, a representative from the local authority, groups of staff and pupils during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with some parents and carers at the start of the school day.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Headteacher: Kate Longstaff

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**Lead inspector:**

Nicky White, His Majesty's Inspector

**Team inspectors:**

Jo Warner, Ofsted Inspector

Lynn Chambers, 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 12 May 2026

## School and pupil context

**Total pupils**

**259**

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**

**189**

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)**

**52.94%**

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**

**2.70%**

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**

**23.94%**

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).

## 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) | 5.6%        | 5.2%             | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 6.2%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 8.0%        | 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) | 20.9%       | 13.0%            | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 13.4%       | 14.6%            | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 24.1%       | 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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