

Inspection of a good school: Witheridge Church of England Primary Academy

Fore Street, Witheridge, Tiverton, Devon EX16 8AH

Inspection date:

21 September 2021

Outcome

Witheridge Church of England Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this village school. Staff say, 'It feels like a family.' The school's Christian ethos encourages pupils to show respect for one another. Staff model the trust vision of 'life, love and learning to the full'. Parents appreciate the care that staff provide for their children.

Leaders prepare pupils successfully for the future. Pupils learn about their local, rural community and compare this to other cultures and world religions. They particularly enjoy writing to their pen pals in India. Pupils are proud to apply for positions of responsibility in school, such as house captain and play leader.

Starting in the Nursery, most children listen attentively and behave well. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that there are adults in school who will keep them safe and help them learn. Pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs thrive with support from the learning mentor.

Leaders ensure that pupils get the best education possible. Staff share these high expectations. Consequently, pupils learn well in most subjects. Reading is at the heart of the 'Big Event' curriculum. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), become keen and confident readers.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Across the curriculum, subject leaders have given great thought to how to sequence learning so that pupils know more and remember more. They have considered carefully how new knowledge builds on what pupils have previously learned. Educational trips, such as visiting mining communities in Wales, bring the curriculum alive. Trust leaders guide subject leaders and colleagues in this important work. Consequently, the curriculum is suitably ambitious across the full range of subjects.

Trust and school leaders prioritise reading. They have made sure that the books for children in Reception and key stage 1 match the sounds and letters that they know. In school, pupils enjoy reading classics such as 'Swallows and Amazons' alongside modern and multicultural texts. Older pupils who are still at the early stages of reading have effective support to catch up. Before pupils read new texts, staff help pupils to read and rehearse the challenging vocabulary needed to understand the story. As a result, pupils encounter each new book with confidence and familiarity.

Children in the Nursery and pre-school share their space with pupils in Reception class. Staff ensure activities are well-tuned and consider children's different stages of development. Children are learning to read and form letters accurately through daily sessions led by the knowledgeable early years staff. However, when learning moves outdoors, independent activities for pupils to practise their early communication and language are not as successful.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works effectively with staff to identify and meet pupils' needs swiftly. This starts in the early years. Some children start school with speech and language difficulties. The SENCo makes sure that they receive specialist help from external professionals and well-trained school staff. Consequently, children are well supported to catch up quickly.

Teachers check that pupils learn well across the curriculum. Support plans for pupils with SEND identify and explain what pupils understand and can do. However, in some subjects, teachers do not use this information well enough to provide pupils with the additional support they need. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn the important knowledge and skills they need to achieve success.

Leaders provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to become caring and dependable citizens. Pupils look after the pet guinea pigs to foster a sense of responsibility and nurture. The school's Christian values teach pupils to 'encourage one another and build each other up'. Pupils enjoy working together to practise public speaking and performing poetry in school and for county competitions.

Staff follow the school behaviour policy consistently and fairly. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and interruptions to learning are rare. Pupils listen and take turns to talk respectfully when they work with a partner.

Members of the trust board and members of the local governing body are equally ambitious for the school and its pupils. They receive helpful information from the headteacher and trust curriculum leaders to strengthen their understanding of the curriculum. Consequently, they are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors make certain that school leaders consider staff workload. Staff are unanimous in their view that leaders prioritise their well-being, and they appreciate it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and know what to do if they have any worries.

Staff take pride in knowing each pupil and their family well. They are trained to spot signs of neglect or abuse. Leaders check that staff have the training they need to follow the school's policy for managing concerns. Staff work effectively with other agencies so that pupils get the help they need.

Leaders make suitable checks to verify that anyone working in the school is safe to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not use the information contained in the plans for pupils with SEND to provide appropriate levels of support. This hampers their learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use the information they receive to plan and deliver an effective curriculum for pupils with SEND in all subjects.
- When the curriculum in the early years calls for independent, outdoor activities, learning is not sustained. Children do not have well-planned activities where they can practise their developing verbal communication. Staff should ensure that pupils have opportunities to further develop their early, spoken language in every aspect of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Witheridge Church of England Primary School, to be good in December 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144560
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10200925
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Ginnings
Headteacher	Lucy Ratcliffe
Website	http://www.witheridge.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average primary school. There are currently four classes: one for pre-school and Reception; one for Years 1 and 2; one for Years 3 and 4; and one for Years 5 and 6.
- The pre-school caters for two to four-year-olds.
- The school joined the Team multi-academy trust in July 2017.
- Since January 2020, a new headteacher, teacher and trust chief executive officer (CEO) are in post. The school shares a SENCo with the other schools in the trust.
- The school is a voluntary-controlled Church of England school. It was inspected in May 2019, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with staff, parents, pupils, the chair of trustees, the CEO, two members of the local governing body and the trust SENCo. They also met the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors did deep dives into three subjects: reading, mathematics and history. They looked at curriculum plans for geography and French. They visited lessons, heard pupils reading, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with subject leaders and the trust curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documentation, including safer recruitment, risk assessments and the training records.
- Inspectors analysed school documentation, including curriculum planning, leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, and reports from the school improvement adviser.
- The lead inspector analysed 12 responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online parents' survey, including eight written comments.

Inspection team

Sue Costello, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Shirley

Ofsted Inspector

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