

Chewton Mendip Church of England VA Primary School

Chewton Mendip, Radstock, Somerset BA3 4LL

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and staff have created a world of inspirational learning experiences for pupils at Chewton Mendip, from the well-kept gardens that pupils nurture, to the fun and interactive French and music sessions. Parents really value what the school offers and are overwhelmingly positive about the education that their children receive. This school is very much at the centre of its community.
- Highly valued and respected by pupils, parents and staff, the headteacher provides clear, calm and effective leadership and has done this through a period of significant staff change in recent years. She is determined that the school continues to improve in every area while keeping pupils at the heart of the decisions she makes.
- Governors seek parents' views, visit frequently and know the school very well. They are ambitious for pupils and provide appropriate challenge to leaders.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour are outstanding. Expectations are high and relationships are respectful during lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils have good information about a wide range of cultures and they value the views of others.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are proud of their school. Pupils are safe and secure.
- Parents are particularly impressed with the support they receive in the Reception class. Children have a successful start here, thanks to the focus from leaders on continual improvement. Children respond to the high expectations for behaviour that are set. They enjoy learning and achieve well.
- Staff are reflective and keen to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A whole-school focus on reading this year has had a positive impact.
- The headteacher is fully aware of the necessity to continue to improve. The development of writing across the school, for example, is a key priority in plans for further improvement. This is because pupils do not apply their writing skills well across a range of subjects and work in pupils' books is generally not well presented.
- The assessment system used to check the progress for pupils is new. Governors and subject leaders do not use this information consistently. As a result, opportunities to improve progress for some pupils are missed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to ensure that pupils across the school build further on their already good progress, leaders including governors and subject leaders need to:
 - embed the use of the new assessment information to check the progress pupils make across the school, identifying any weaknesses and making improvements as needed.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for writing, including spelling and handwriting so that:
 - children make rapid progress in writing during the Reception Year and continue this good progress as they move through the school
 - pupils are able to present their writing to a high standard
 - pupils use their writing skills, including spelling and handwriting, effectively across a range of subject areas in order to deepen their understanding and extend their thinking
 - pupils are clear about what they need to do next to improve their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, supported by governors, has kept a firm focus on ensuring that pupils achieve the very best outcomes possible. Morale is high due to the nurture and encouragement of the headteacher and senior staff.
- The headteacher holds staff rigorously to account for the progress that pupils make. Working closely with a group of local schools, she also ensures that a high level of professional development is in place to support staff to develop their work. Teachers who are new to teaching are well supported and encouraged. They are given wide opportunities to receive additional training and to visit other schools in order to improve their work.
- Pupils' learning is planned effectively. Links with schools in other countries, learning outside and interesting activities all contribute to the broad curriculum that prepares them well for their future. Residential and other trips provide rich first-hand experiences that pupils appreciate. Pupils say these trips 'help bring our learning to life; it makes it real and fun'.
- Strong values are woven throughout the curriculum. Pupils learn about social and moral issues and discover about a range of cultures and countries. The wide learning experiences support pupils' understanding of issues such as tolerance and respect for diversity. As a result, pupils are respectful and listen carefully to the views of others.
- Learning also extends to after school and there is a particularly wide range of activities and clubs available after school. From science to knitting, from pottery to a climbing wall, there is something for everyone. Pupils really enjoy their learning.
- Additional funding such as the pupil premium funding is used well to provide targeted extra teaching for pupils who need it, and because of this precise attention, these pupils are making strong progress. Leaders also ensure that funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to support them to not only make good progress but also to be fully included in the life of the school. Additional adults provide personalised support for pupils as needed, which enables these pupils to thrive.
- Leaders have ensured that the physical education (PE) and sport premium enhances the sport provision for pupils. A wide range of sporting activities are available both on and off the school site and staff have the skills they need in order to teach sports and outside activities well. For example, teachers are skilled in teaching swimming skills at the on-site swimming pool and no child has left the school unable to swim in the last three years.
- The headteacher has a collaborative approach and works closely with local headteachers to ensure that assessment judgements made by teachers are accurate. She regularly seeks external views of the performance of the school and invites a number of advisers to support her, including a local authority adviser. Although the school has not maintained an overall judgement of outstanding, the advice, support

and challenge have contributed to the improvements recently made and leaders, including governors, value this.

- Subject leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, are developing their leadership skills. They work cohesively with the headteacher in order to continue to make improvements to the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They have good subject knowledge and, due to activities such as looking at learning across the school and looking at pupils' books, they accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Although teachers have good information about the progress their pupils are making, subject leaders do not rigorously evaluate information from the new assessment system in order to identify weaknesses in pupils' progress for particular groups of pupils. This means that weaker progress for some groups of pupils may be missed and these pupils may not be making the progress that they should.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well equipped to support the development of the school as they have a wide range of skills and experiences to draw on. There is no complacency, however, and governors attend training events such as those concerned with safeguarding, to ensure they are fully informed of the latest developments.
- Communication is a strength. Governors are effective in making sure that they take account of a wide range of views about the school. For example, views are gathered from parents using questionnaires and meetings. Governors also attend staff meetings in order to listen to staff views. They ensure that they are involved with external visits and reviews of the performance of the school. As a result, governors know the school very well. This helps them to work effectively with leaders to make key decisions and to ensure that the school provides well for pupils.
- Governors are fully aware of how additional funding such as the pupil premium, special educational needs funding and the PE and sport premium is spent. They challenge leaders to ensure that pupils benefit from this and that their education is enhanced because of it.
- The assessment system is new and although some work has started, for example to look at the progress of pupils who have educational needs and/or disabilities, governors do not consistently use the information available to check and challenge leaders on the progress of groups of pupils across the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe and staff are well informed about how to notice concerns about a child and how to report any concerns. The headteacher is also the designated lead for safeguarding and she has ensured that she and the rest of the staff and governors are kept up to date with a wide range of training, including training to ensure that signs of radicalisation are noticed. She also works with a wide range of agencies, should the need arise, in order to fully support any families who need such help.

- Risk assessments are detailed and ensure that staff are vigilant about on-site safety as well as keeping pupils safe when attending off-site activities.
- Pupils are safe and say that they feel secure at school. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and if it does occur, it is quickly sorted out by staff. Pupils also know who to talk to should they have any worries. All parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agreed that pupils are well looked after and that they feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school. Classrooms are a hive of learning. Little time is lost as pupils keenly work on their tasks. High expectations permeate the school and staff and pupils manage their time well to ensure that they get tasks completed. Teaching assistants support learning for groups or individual pupils well.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan and adapt their teaching in order to meet the needs of individuals. Teachers are generally quick to notice misconceptions and ensure that pupils are supported with them.
- Parents are extremely happy with the quality of the teaching provided at the school. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View say that their child is taught well. All parents say that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Pupils have the number skills expected for their ages and teachers have ensured that the basics for mathematical thinking are secure. Challenges are set for pupils, particularly the most able pupils, and pupils relish these opportunities. The subject leader for mathematics supports teachers to provide more reasoning and problem-solving activities in order to deepen the understanding of mathematical concepts. This work has started recently.
- There has been a focus this year to improve the quality of reading in school. There have been new resources, extra workshops for parents, activities to encourage reading and more emphasis on teaching a wide range of skills in reading, including comprehension. As a result, there is a strong culture of reading in the school.
- Pupils really enjoy their reading and teachers, supported effectively by teaching assistants, ensure that pupils have high-quality books to read and explore. Pupils work enthusiastically at their comprehension activities. They also appreciate the time to discuss books with their peers and their teacher. There has been an emphasis on encouraging boys, in particular, to read and there is now no difference in attitudes towards reading; both girls and boys can talk about authors and books they enjoy.
- Pupils receive feedback that helps them to improve their work and marking is in line with the school's policy. Pupils know what to do to improve, although some of the targets set in their books are not matched closely to their needs and therefore pupils are sometimes not clear about what they need to do in order to improve their work, particularly their writing.
- There is not an agreed approach to the teaching of spelling or handwriting. As a result, pupils' books show that these skills are less well developed. Pupils have good ideas and produce some examples of writing that is at the expected standard for their age but

their weaker spelling and handwriting prevents some pupils reaching the higher standards of which they are capable.

- Teachers do not plan writing opportunities in a range of subjects in order for pupils to extend their writing skills and deepen their understanding of how to write complete, finished pieces of writing within a range of contexts. Leaders have rightly identified writing, including spelling and handwriting, as the next main focus for improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The leaders' focus on ensuring that pupils receive a wide range of learning experiences supports personal growth and development, preparing them well for their future lives.
- Pupils are excited about their learning and talk enthusiastically about past projects. Throughout the school, pupils show excellent attitudes towards their activities and towards their friends. Many examples were seen of pupils supporting each other with learning tasks. During discussions, pupils listen respectfully to different viewpoints.
- Pupils were able to describe different types of bullying, including online bullying. They were also clear about what bullying is and what to do if they had concerns about any bullying behaviours they see.
- The wide curriculum both in school and after school supports pupils to be active. They also have a strong awareness of aspects of how to be healthy. For example, pupils could explain about the dangers of being in the sun.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school is a calm and orderly place in which to learn. Pupils move around the different buildings and play areas sensibly and without fuss. They are extremely polite and well mannered, showing a caring, tolerant attitude towards each other and towards adults.
- Pupils want to attend school and attendance is good; it is above the national average. The school works effectively to support a very small number of pupils who have not attended well. This extra support has a positive impact on pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children in the early years consistently meet or exceed the national average by the end of the Reception Year although outcomes in writing were slightly below the national average in 2016.
- Phonics outcomes in Year 1 have improved each year for the past three years and are above national averages.

- Pupils generally achieve at around national average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. As a result of some weaker teaching in the past, lower outcomes in reading across the school led to a firm focus on improving both the quality of teaching for reading and the reading culture. School data shows that reading outcomes are now improving, with some pupils catching up very quickly, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils.
- Pupils' books show that in mathematics, pupils' fluency in using number facts matches the expectation for their age. Outcomes for the highest-ability pupils are also improving as teachers more frequently challenge them to use their skills to solve problems that are more complex.
- Outcomes in science are at or above national averages. Pupils' understanding of science concepts is supported well by the rich learning experiences outside with planting and observing plants and insects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and or/disabilities make good progress from their starting points due to the adaptations made to their learning, including support from additional adults if this is needed.
- Outcomes in writing in 2016 were just below the national average and spelling outcomes were also below. Writing in pupils' books shows that while some aspects of writing are improving, there are too few opportunities for pupils to bring their writing skills together and use them across a range of subjects.
- The writing outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils are more successful due to the additional support they receive. However, boys' writing and that of the most able pupils is not as strong. Outcomes in spelling are not consistent across the school as there is not an agreed strategy for teaching spelling.

Early years provision

Good

- Children arrive at school with skills that are broadly those expected for their age. Staff ensure that there is strong communication with pre-school providers as well as a range of other agencies. This helps support the successful transition into the school that parents value highly. Parents also value the invitations throughout the year to come into school to take part in learning and to find out more about how to support learning at home.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses and, as with other staff in the school, are enthusiastic to continue to improve all aspects of the provision. Staff create a welcoming, well-organised and safe place to learn. As with the rest of the school, a recent focus on reading means that there are good numbers of high-quality books that children enjoy looking at.
- Children are self-assured and confident. They enthusiastically take part in whole-class discussions as well as moving happily around different learning areas both inside and outside. Much of the learning is planned around children's interests. For example, children enjoy adapting the role play area to suit their own play situations inside. They also enjoy getting messy with mud and sand outside.

- Due to the good-quality teaching they receive, children achieve well and by the end of their first year most are well prepared for learning in Year 1. The proportion of children reaching the expected standards in writing was slightly lower than the national average in 2016.
- Additional funding is used effectively to ensure that the individual needs of children are met through carefully planned extra teaching. Children who have special educational needs receive adaptations to their learning that help them to be fully included.
- The teaching of phonics supports children with their reading and writing skills. Writing in learning journals shows that some children, while reaching the expectations for their age, could in fact achieve even higher standards.

School details

Unique reference number	123827
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10008235

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Philip Jenkins
Headteacher	Clare Rice
Telephone number	01761 241465
Website	www.chewtonmendipschool.org.uk
Email address	chewtonmendip@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2008

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- The number of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is significantly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is significantly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school has met the government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, for the past three years.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, learning was observed, alongside senior leaders, across the school. Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was also held with a group of governors, including the chair of governors and the lead for safeguarding. A telephone conversation took place with a local authority adviser.
- A number of school documents were looked at, including information about pupils' progress, the school development plan and the school's evaluation of its performance. Other documents related to safeguarding and attendance were scrutinised.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils and discussions took place with several pupils during lessons and breaktimes. Alongside senior leaders, a selection of pupils' books was looked at.
- Several meetings and discussions took place with parents and the 45 views on Parent View were taken into account.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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