

South Molton United Church of England Primary School

Exeter Road, South Molton, Devon EX36 4EN

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a school that is improving. The headteacher has helped to create an atmosphere where staff and pupils alike flourish and thrive.
- Excellent relationships and information-sharing mean that parents and carers are fully involved with what their children are learning.
- Teaching is good. Staff have consistently good subject knowledge. As a result, pupils in all year groups, and in all subjects, make good progress.
- Staff are highly effective in supporting pupils' personal development and welfare. During their time in school, pupils gain good behaviours for learning.
- Pupils are achieving better than previously by the end of Year 6, as seen in the national test results in 2017.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly of reading and mathematics, has improved. However, pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics remains below that seen in their writing.
- The roles of subject leaders are not yet fully developed so that they can check that, and help, all pupils reach their potential, particularly the most able.
- The leadership and management of the early years are strong. Children get a good start to their school education due to good teaching. The resources used inside the classrooms are of good quality and varied. Children are well prepared for transition into Year 1.
- The quality of the outdoor area attached to the early years classrooms is not as good as the inside. There is no protection from the elements and this hampers pupils practising their writing outdoors. The external equipment to extend pupils' physical development is limited.
- Overall, pupils have a good understanding of life in modern Britain. However, some do not know what it is like to live and learn in a different locality, such as a large city.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for pupils so that leaders and those responsible for governance ensure that:
 - they continue to develop middle leadership so that these leaders can help check that all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, reach their potential in all national curriculum subjects
 - pupils' achievements in reading and mathematics continue to improve
 - pupils have a better understanding of the world, particularly the United Kingdom, outside the realms of their own experience.
- Improve the outcomes in the early years by providing:
 - more opportunities for children to practise their writing outdoors
 - suitable climbing equipment for children to enhance their physical skills and development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- All staff and the governing body have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The confidence, commitment and collegiality of staff are significant strengths of the school.
- Leaders and the governing body have focused on the right things, in the right order. They ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all curriculum areas continues to improve. Gaps between those pupils who are disadvantaged and others are diminishing. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are effectively supported in lessons.
- Pupils blossom in this school because staff nurture their talents and interests. Pupils are provided with engaging, inspiring teaching and learning opportunities across the whole range of the national curriculum subjects. Clubs and activities also contribute to pupils becoming confident and passionate young people.
- Leaders ensure that interventions are used well to support pupils who need more preparation before new topics are introduced. They are also used effectively to help pupils when they have not fully grasped what they needed to know in a lesson. This work is helping pupils to maintain their learning at the same rates as their peers or to catch up quickly.
- Following the school's ethos of being 'Uniquely different, united together, universally prepared' provides pupils with a resolute moral compass. All members of the school's community live and breathe the ethos of the school every day, in every way. Everyone is treated as an individual, with respect, kindness and understanding. As a result, pupils are taught in a happy, safe, supportive, nurturing environment where staff work hard to find, and develop, pupils' individual talents.
- Leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school. They have ensured that staff receive good-quality training and the time to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. They know what needs to be done to improve the school further and have developed plans to help them achieve their goals. Leaders' actions have ensured that teaching assistants are more supportive of the class teachers in helping pupils with their learning.
- Since the previous inspection there have been considerable changes to staffing at all levels. The headteacher has ensured that teachers have good subject knowledge, are committed to the school's ethos and have the resources that they need to teach. However, some middle leadership roles are not as well established as they could be. Not all middle leaders have the same impact on checking the progress of different groups of pupils and raising pupils' achievement in their subjects, particularly the most able.
- In general, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand the rule of law and democracy. However, pupils do not have a good understanding of what it is like to live and learn in a different locality in the United Kingdom, particularly a large city.

Governance of the school

- Governors, along with the headteacher, have managed the changes to the school since the previous inspection well. They ensure that they, and staff, keep up to date with their training in areas such as safeguarding.
- Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's performance. They use their knowledge to challenge and support the headteacher, and other leaders, to help drive further improvements. They have the same uncompromising determination and vision as the headteacher.
- The use of additional funding for sport, physical education and pupil premium is carefully monitored. Funds are used wisely to further enrich the curriculum provided and to ensure that staff gain in expertise. The governing body is aware that it needs to explain the expenditure and impact on pupils' development more clearly on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff have more than the basic level of safeguarding training, with four members of staff having the highest. Policies for safeguarding are clear, known and followed by pupils, staff, governors, volunteers and parents.
- School leaders work closely with other agencies and providers to ensure that pupils are kept safe at home and in school. Clear, comprehensive records are kept when needed.
- The culture, ethos and staff modelling give pupils a balanced view of people who are different from them. The school's strong promotion of tolerance, understanding and harmony is part of the way that staff protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are skilled at using questioning to extract key information from pupils to support the learning of others. They make learning memorable, dynamic and stimulating by helping pupils to link new and old information.
- In mathematics, pupils are given work that challenges them to justify their thinking through the 'always, sometimes, never and prove it' approaches to teaching. For example, older pupils are skilfully taught about the Fibonacci sequence (a series of numbers where a number is found by adding up the two numbers before it). Rather than just being told, pupils are challenged with working out the relationships between the code numbers for themselves. This motivates all pupils, particularly the most able, to produce the answers to problems without adult support. Those who find this sort of problem-solving trickier are ably supported by teachers and other adults in lessons.
- Learning is brought to life in lessons. For example, in geography, the topic work on rivers is linked to the local area and London. Pupils investigate linked historical elements, such as visiting Lynmouth to explore the changes to the area since the 1952 flood disaster.

- In science, pupils have a good range of experiences covering a wide range of topic areas. Teachers make sure that when starting a new topic they have a clear grasp of what each pupil knows and understands at the start. This enables them to extend pupils' knowledge and to address any misconceptions. Pupils readily make links with other subjects, such as the story of Icarus when sharing their knowledge about flight.
- In music, pupils' composing and team skills are developed through carefully planned activities. Using the story 'How to Train Your Dragon', pupils explore the words in the video in their English lessons to develop their own writing, increasing their written and speaking vocabulary. Pupils' understanding of the narrative is then extended into their music lessons. Here, pupils use visual representations, as with modern composers, of the musical score to follow the different instruments through different movements. They then use this to create their own music and musical scores.
- Pupils told inspectors how they appreciated the time and effort that teachers put in to making their lessons purposeful and enjoyable. However, leaders are aware that teachers need to ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, reach their potential in all of the national curriculum subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils gain in self-confidence and are protected from harm. Those new to the school are well supported, so that they flourish and blossom. Pupils throughout the school become confident and self-assured.
- Pupils have a good knowledge about how to keep safe on the internet, and when using mobile phones. Posters around the school support and reinforce the messages on safety that staff are giving to pupils.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils gain a rounded education. They have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as model citizens.
- In general, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, in terms of democracy, tolerance, the rule of law and equality. They appreciate that in this country there are different religions, that people have different appearances and hold different beliefs. However, pupils do not have a good understanding of what it is like to live and learn in a different locality in the United Kingdom, particularly a large city.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils readily clear up after themselves, for example after having lunch. They move around the school in a calm, yet purposeful, manner. They are polite to each other, staff and visitors.
- Bullying or harassment are unusual because pupils learn how to respond to others through collective worship and through the planned curriculum. On the rare occasions where they happen, they are quickly dealt with by staff through restorative justice.

Pupils were keen to express to the inspectors how well the school supported them, making them feel safe and be safe.

- There is no persistent low-level disruption to lessons. Some pupils join the school with learning behaviours that are not as strong as those who have been at the school longer. These pupils are more likely to fiddle with objects and not pay full attention in lessons. Nevertheless, they respond quickly to staff instructions and requests.
- Attendance is around the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children in the Reception Year make good progress. The school has only one set of information about the level of development children have made by the end of the Reception Year. Those who do not reach a good level of development are skilfully taught in Year 1 to enable them to catch up, for example recognising words, writing expanded noun phrases and increasingly working independently from adults. Likewise, the most able pupils when joining Year 1 quickly develop a good understanding of how to use punctuation through a variety of different types of writing, such as sequencing stories, creating poems, writing instructions and recounting events.
- Pupils' outcomes in their writing ability have considerably improved. Attainment is in line with national figures at the expected standard and is higher for those pupils working at greater depth. Overall, pupils' progress in writing is above average. These improvements reflect the good quality of support and training for staff provided by the school leaders.
- Pupils' write extensively in all subjects. They write for different audiences, in different genres and for real situations, making their writing purposeful. More-challenging texts are being used to extend pupils' vocabulary. Staff questioning and pupils discussing their writing and honing it through editing are supporting further improvements in pupils' writing achievements.
- In reading and mathematics, pupils' progress has improved but not to the same level or rate of speed as for writing. School leaders have invested in further support and training for staff. This is already having a positive impact on increasing the rate and depth of pupils' achievement in all year groups. Similarly, pupils' mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem-solving have improved.
- Pupils willingly read their work aloud in lessons and participate in discussions when required. They read with good intonation and fluency, so that when reading texts to other pupils they understand the inferences in the text.
- Pupils retain information about what they have learned in all subjects in the national curriculum. This is because they are enjoying what they are studying. They particularly relish the range of practical experiences that are provided, such as dissecting a sheep's heart as part of studying anatomy, performing in plays and holding musical events.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has created a safe and supportive learning environment in which children thrive. Staff keep accurate, detailed records of children's progress and

development. These are shared electronically with parents. Parents report that they find this informative and helpful. They too can send evidence of what children have done at home. This makes them feel, and be, part of the school's learning community. It helps provide staff with a solid understanding about the children in their charge and develops good relationships with children's families.

- The teaching of phonics is good. As a result, children quickly learn to read and spell because of the staff's consistent and accurate use of systematic, synthetic phonics. Children who struggle with their learning are ably supported through targeted interventions by well-trained, knowledgeable adults. This helps close the gaps in their phonic knowledge. Staff make sure that pupils' misconceptions in this area are corrected quickly.
- Adults also work closely with children to develop their mathematical knowledge and understanding. The leaders are aspirational at getting children to work with numbers up to 20. However, sometimes when children are working on their own, doing tasks such as subtraction, misconceptions are not so quickly spotted by adults.
- Children develop good skills for writing over the Reception Year. Most start off with letter formation that is incorrect. By the end of the year, they progressively develop correctly formed cursive letters. The most able write in full sentences, using full stops and capital letters, with most words spelled correctly.
- Staff ensure that children develop skills to increase their independence. Children make their own snacks and help themselves to fruit and vegetables. They spread their own butter and cheese on crackers if they want to eat them. They do this sensibly and learn how to be hygienic.
- Children move around the Reception Year area calmly, sharing resources and helping each other. They are provided with a suitable range of experiences and activities to work in small groups, on their own and with adults. They are well trained in tidying up after themselves, in which they take pride.
- Good-quality resources are provided indoors. However, the outdoor area attached to the early years classrooms is sparse. There is no protection from the weather. Children are regularly encouraged to go outside, although the open space hinders staff's ability to plan a wider range of activities, such as for developing writing. This is because it is often very windy and activities need to be sturdy to compensate for this, limiting what can be done. In addition, the external equipment provides limited experiences for children's physical development, such as climbing.
- Safeguarding is effective. Children are kept safe and know how to keep themselves safe both in the classrooms and in the outside area.

School details

Unique reference number	113454
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10049018

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Webber
Headteacher	Kevin O'Donnell
Telephone number	01769 572656
Website	www.smups.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@smups.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	November 2012

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection in 2012, there have been significant changes in staff. All of the full-time teaching staff have been appointed since then. The headteacher took up his substantive role in December 2015.
- Until 2016, the school was a junior school with pupils joining the school in Year 3 transferring from the nearby infant school. Most pupils now join the school in the Reception Year. However, pupils also join the school in different year groups.
- In April 2017, the school relocated to new purpose-built accommodation.
- Variation in cohort sizes each year means that some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes and others in single-year groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors worked with the school leaders throughout the two days and reviewed pupils' work with them. They also met with members of the governing body and parents and had a telephone discussion with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspectors scrutinised the quality of pupils' work and listened to them reading. They talked with pupils about their life in school. The inspectors also observed pupils learning in lessons and when not in class.
- The inspectors took account of the 31 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and an email from a parent. The 10 responses submitted from staff to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire were considered. There were no electronic responses from pupils.
- The inspectors considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation and action plans.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Aisha Waziri

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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