

Nunney First School

Catch Road, Nunney, Frome, Somerset BA11 4NE

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the academy conversion in 2016, leaders and managers in the school and across the trust have taken effective action to secure the necessary improvements. As a result, this is now a good school.
- The headteacher is uncompromising in her vision to get the best for every pupil. Her ambition is shared by like-minded leaders and staff. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education, including at the end of the early years.
- Leadership responsibilities are well distributed among the school team. Teachers, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), fulfil their leadership roles admirably. This ensures that pupils achieve well, including those who are disadvantaged.
- The trust provides additional capacity through the effective challenge of others, such as the school improvement partner (SIP) and quality assurance partner (QAP). As a result, leaders are held firmly to account for continued improvement.
- Teachers know the pupils well. They use information successfully, to plan work that meets pupils' needs. However, a few of the most able pupils are not routinely challenged to attain the highest standards, particularly in writing.
- Teachers and other adults have positive relationships with the pupils. This forms the basis for effective teaching and learning, as well as for the safeguarding and care of pupils.
- Teachers mostly have high expectations of pupils, resulting in good achievement. However, there are occasions when teachers do not insist on pupils producing well-presented work or meeting desirable standards of handwriting.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. This enables pupils to get off to a flying start in their early reading development.
- The curriculum provides high-quality opportunities for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. As a result, pupils' attitudes towards each other and their behaviour are outstanding.
- In a few subjects, particularly humanities, science and languages, the curriculum design does not ensure the most effective sequencing of key skills and knowledge.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils' errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are identified or tackled quickly enough. This occasionally leads to pupils not producing written work to the standards of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by implementing planned sequences for the acquisition of skills and knowledge in the full range of subjects to ensure high standards across the curriculum, particularly in science, the humanities and languages.
- Strengthen teaching and learning further by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting skills and presentation in written work
 - ensuring that pupils check, correct and edit their work to reduce errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - stretching and challenging the most able pupils, including those in the Reception Year, consistently to reach the highest standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the academy conversion in June 2016, leaders and managers have taken effective action to secure the necessary improvements. Leaders at all levels, including those in the trust and new leaders in the school, have brought about the rapid improvements needed. As a result, pupils enjoy the school and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The headteacher, ably supported by other teachers, is uncompromising in her pursuit of excellence. She wants every pupil to achieve to their full potential. This ambition is shared and reflected in the work of other teachers, who also lead with a sense of pride and a passion for improving pupils' outcomes.
- Leadership responsibilities are well distributed among the school's small but dedicated team. Teachers fulfil their leadership roles admirably. Their work is meticulous and rooted in well-established systems with clear expectations. Leaders hold each other to account to ensure that priorities are identified and shortcomings rapidly remedied.
- Leaders work collegiately and with a common purpose. This enables them to share the workload and to tackle the highest priorities. For example, leaders quickly understood that they had to improve the quality of phonics teaching and early reading. As a result, they have embedded an effective phonics strategy with rigorous teaching and assessment to ensure that pupils make rapid progress in this vital aspect of their learning.
- Leaders with responsibility for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are effective. Both the headteacher and the SENCo work effectively to produce high-quality 'individual learning plans' (ILPs) that identify barriers for pupils. These are meticulous and fully evaluated to ensure that vulnerable pupils make good progress. As a result, most are supported to catch up quickly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The trust provides additional internal capacity and challenge through well-targeted and agreed visits to the school by the SIP and QAP. These concentrate on priorities, such as improving fluency and mastery in mathematics. They increase accountability and provide effective support and challenge, including to the local governing body.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides high-quality opportunities, with an emphasis on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, which enable pupils to thrive. For example, pupils take lead roles as eco-, digital- or well-being-champions, which give them a deep insight into issues which directly impact on their lives. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are knowledgeable about the main world faiths, but also show an understanding of secular or non-religious world views.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is well managed and directed. Strategies are fully evaluated, so that leaders can adapt provision and activities to best meet the different needs of pupils. Leaders are creative in their use of the funding. As a result, pupils' attendance and achievement have improved markedly within the past two years.

- Leaders also ensure that the sports and physical education (PE) funding is targeted and used well. For example, the SENCo, who also takes a lead in PE, monitors the 'take-up' of disadvantaged pupils in extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities. This attention has led to a dramatic increase in disadvantaged pupils attending clubs. For example, more than three quarters of those eligible for free school meals have attended a sports club or use the breakfast club.
- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure various checks and balances, including external moderation and visits, are used to challenge leaders and provide ongoing staff training and professional development.
- Leaders have robust systems for holding teachers to account. Appraisals and performance reviews are closely linked to the school's priorities. The headteacher and trust have worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by raising the level of challenge, increasing accountability and not tolerating staff underperformance.
- The curriculum is currently in the process of being revised and developed. Leaders have a clear rationale with strong intentions for what they want pupils to know and be able to do. However, in a few subjects, particularly humanities, science and languages, the curriculum's design is not complete in terms of leaders and teachers being clear about the sequences of learning, or progression of skills and knowledge. This leads, at times, to some inconsistencies in outcomes or in the quality of learning in these subjects.

Governance of the school

- Members and trustees of the board have worked effectively to sponsor the school and secure the rapid improvements needed since the predecessor school was placed in special measures in April 2015.
- Leaders have been efficient in identifying weaknesses and targeting these to improve the effectiveness of leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- Trustees, including the chief executive officer (CEO), have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use this knowledge to take timely and strategic action to improve the school. Issues include, for example, improving the provision and teaching of phonics; the current drive to improve mathematics (fluency), and the overall condition of the school environment, including the outdoor space for the early years.
- The board provides challenge and support for the local governing body (LGB), which is appointed and operates through the trust's scheme of delegation. This model affords some autonomy and local representation in the running of the school.
- The LGB comprises individuals who are highly motivated, including the relatively new chair of governors. They contribute by visiting and checking the work of the school, for example undertaking safeguarding checks. These visits add value by holding leaders to account and seeking justification for the impact of key strategies, including the pupil premium grant. They are ensuring that local governors are increasingly knowledgeable and confident.

- There have been some changes to personnel on the LGB. Governors and trustees recognise that there is still room for improvement in terms of how well governors understand their roles and responsibilities within the bigger picture of the trust's structure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and know what to do to refer or report any concerns. Leaders act quickly and work effectively with a range of external agencies to keep pupils safe.
- Pre-employment arrangements comply fully with government requirements. Leaders ensure that full employment histories are complete. Staff are fully vetted by a process which includes taking up relevant references and making safeguarding checks, to ensure they are safe to work with pupils.
- Training is also kept up to date, including for governors. As a result, adults are aware of signs of harm and abuse. They understand the full range of contemporary issues, including potential exposure to harm through social media or the internet, and female genital mutilation.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school and say that they feel safe. They trust school staff and have confidence in them. Staff interact well with the pupils to ensure a culture of trust. Staff have a firmly held belief that: 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know the pupils well. They use assessment information successfully to plan work that meets pupils' needs. In particular, ILPs are meticulous for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, or those who speak English as an additional language. They identify the precise next steps for pupils to overcome specific barriers. As a result, vulnerable pupils are targeted effectively and often make strong progress.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers and teaching assistants understand the school's approach of carefully sequenced steps for pupils to acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding in letters and sounds. Assessments and records are precise. These ensure that lessons and pupils' books are matched to the pupils' needs.
- Teachers have provided information to parents and carers about phonics, early reading and numeracy. Workshops about these have been warmly received and welcomed. As a result, parents are knowledgeable and provide additional guidance and support for their children at home.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable input through delivering phonics, providing interventions and other activities, including one-to-one work with identified pupils. Teaching assistants work well alongside teachers to contribute information and ideas. This instils high-quality ongoing professional dialogue which leads to changes in provision or planning to benefit pupils.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons and feel confident to give answers and 'have a go'. Teachers motivate pupils

and use a variety of effective techniques to engage pupils, such as working in pairs or groups to help pupils generate or share ideas for different tasks in a range of subjects.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils. This ensures that pupils make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are occasions when teachers do not insist on the pupils producing well-presented work, including with good handwriting, to the standard of which they are capable.
- Despite the many strengths in teaching, there are times when a few of the most able pupils are not stretched to attain the highest standards, particularly in writing. This holds a few back, so that, for example, they write scientific explanations, or carry out investigations, which are sometimes limited in composition or ideas.
- There are times when pupils are not consistently challenged to check or correct errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar. This mars otherwise strong pieces of work. For example, where pupils make repeated mistakes with common word endings (suffixes), it detracts from the overall quality of the writing. These mistakes sometimes go unnoticed for too long, which affects pupils' progress, including that of middle- and high-achieving pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are highly motivated. They are curious and keen to learn. Pupils are also very willing to help each other and share their knowledge.
- Pupils understand what it means to be and how to be an effective learner. They apply skills and demonstrate attributes such as team work and perseverance. These are qualities that are instilled from the start and continue throughout the years at Nunney.
- Pupils have a profound understanding of difference and show respect for other cultures and religions. For example, they talk knowledgeably about Islam, Judaism and Christianity. They can describe traditions linked to different religions and cultures. They are knowledgeable about world faiths and also secular and non-religious views. Pupils show compassion and understanding when they discuss the different points of views in the world.
- The pupils are keenly involved in the local community. They contribute through different activities, including participation in the village nativity and the annual village flower show. Pupils are proud of their community, just as the community is proud of the school.
- Pupils are well rounded and ready for the next stage in their learning. They are gaining positive insights into British values and life in modern Britain. However, there is further scope to improve languages and related cultural learning through this aspect of the school's curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct and behaviour are exemplary. This is seen in lessons and when pupils are playing or relaxing together. Pupils are courteous. For example, they hold doors open and spontaneously thank each other. Relationships in the school are harmonious and strong.
- Staff model the kinds of behaviours they want pupils to emulate. Consequently, pupils are calm and show consideration in a variety of ways. During assemblies, pupils and staff share moments of joy, celebration or reflection together, which further promotes a strong sense of community.
- Parents endorse the work of leaders. They recognise the outstanding work of the school to ensure that their children are happy, well nurtured and valued. Typical parental comments on Parent View included: 'The pupils at the school are kind, inclusive, well behaved and caring', and: 'The school has a strong nurturing approach whilst having an inclusive environment which is child-centred'. The staff survey taken during the inspection also confirmed these views.
- Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils say this does not happen. They told the inspector that, if pupils become overexcited or boisterous, then staff deal effectively with pupils in a calm way to settle the situation. Pupils have confidence in the staff.
- Pupils love coming to the school and are keen to attend. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved significantly and is much higher than the national average (compared to an average-sized primary school). The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is marginally lower than that of others in the school but has also improved dramatically due to the diligence and efforts of staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The published performance data for Nunney is not reliable due to the very small cohort sizes involved. It is therefore inappropriate to make any comparisons with national benchmarks.
- Achievement in the school has improved rapidly. The previous legacy of underachievement has been tackled robustly. As a result, the overwhelming majority of pupils in the school have caught up in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Analysis of pupils' current work in books and our observations and discussions show that pupils are making good progress. Most are on track to being well prepared for the next stage in their education, including moving on to middle school from Year 4, or into key stage 2 from Year 2.
- Pupils rapidly gain a secure knowledge of phonics for segmenting (for spelling) and blending (for reading). This enables pupils, including disadvantaged and lower-attaining pupils, to read with increasing confidence and enjoyment. Their improvement starts in the Reception Year, continues well and carries through Year 1. Current Year 1 pupils are showing strong skills to achieve the standards of the phonics screening check well.
- Pupils across the school read with enjoyment. They are enthusiastic readers, including

those in Year 4, who are also acquiring a range of more sophisticated skills to infer, deduce and comment critically about what they have read.

- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Bespoke targets with ongoing reviews mean pupils overcome barriers swiftly. As a result, any differences in the school are diminishing quickly.
- The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are also making good progress. These pupils are gaining confidence to speak, interact and communicate effectively, including through reading and writing.
- Targeting of work to tackle weaknesses in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding, particularly lack of fluency and mastery in numbers and calculation, is working well. Pupils are able to explain their reasoning and recall number facts well to solve problems. While there is more to do in mathematics, especially for the most able pupils, the current initiatives are proving to be successful.
- The quality of work and learning, especially of most-able pupils, seen in subjects other than English and mathematics, is sometimes variable and below the standards these same pupils have reached in English and mathematics.
- Similarly, pupils', including most-able pupils', outcomes in writing are not consistently reaching the higher standards (greater depth) across the full range of subjects. Leaders have recognised this and are taking steps to improve writing outcomes as part of the current school development plan.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader and staff are ambitious for the children. They have well-established routines to reinforce their high expectations. As a result, children, including disadvantaged children, achieve well and make strong progress.
- The early years leader understands the urgency of getting children to know their letters and sounds so they can begin to read simple words and sentences independently. Robust assessments and effective teaching of phonics in Hedgehog Class quickly provide children with the skills, knowledge and understanding for this.
- Leaders have been proactive in refreshing the learning environment so that children are curious, interested and independent. The early years, as with other areas of the school, has improved markedly since the time of the academy conversion.
- The learning environment ensures that children have access to a range of age-appropriate resources and opportunities. For example, the children enjoy using the reading area to share books, listen to stories and handle books. There are also many activities to promote good physical development and motor control.
- Children benefit from being able to express themselves and move freely between chosen activities. This enables them to become more confident socially and emotionally. Adults know when to intervene. There is a good balance of adult-led sessions, such as in phonics and numeracy, and activities where the children learn among themselves.
- Staff know the children and their needs well. This ensures that the children enjoy a range of different challenges and activities matched well to their learning and

developmental needs. However, opportunities for independent writing are not as prominent or as well constructed as they could be. This limits the progress of some children, including the most able. Consequently, too few children 'exceed' in writing by the time they leave the Reception Year.

- Staff work effectively and communicate well with parents. There is a range of transition activities to support the children's introduction to the school. Parents feel valued and are positive about the start that their children get in Reception.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Staff receive training in line with the rest of the school. Staffing ratios, paediatric first-aid training and other health and safety requirements of the early years are fully met.

School details

Unique reference number	142579
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10088273

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

Type of school	First
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the board	John Jones
Headteacher	Sue Heal
Telephone number	01373 836429
Website	nunneyfirstschool.co.uk
Email address	office@nunneyschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Nunney First academy is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. It consists of two classes. The Reception Year is taught alongside Year 1 as part of Hedgehog Class. Years 2–4 are taught separately in Otter Class.
- The predecessor school was judged to be inadequate and require special measures in April 2015. Subsequently, the school received an academy order. It was then sponsored by The Bath and Mendip Partnership Trust, commencing in June 2016.
- The headteacher works in the school for two days a week. At other times, she works as a quality-assurance partner for the trust.
- The majority of pupils in the school are White British.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils in both classes, including in the early years. Learning walks were accompanied by the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, senior teacher/SENCo and other leaders, including those responsible for mathematics and English.
- Discussions were held with different representatives of the trust. These included: the chair of the board of trustees; the CEO; and representatives of the LGB, SIP and QAP.
- The inspector gained the views of pupils throughout the inspection, including by discussions at breaktimes and meeting with some Year 1, 2 and 4 pupils.
- The inspector reviewed pupils' work in books to establish the current quality of work and standards.
- The inspector listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 4. He also scrutinised pupils' daily reading records and assessments.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and parents to seek their views of the school. The 14 surveys from Parent View and corresponding free-text comments were considered by inspectors. Inspectors also met with parents face to face.
- Information from the pupil surveys was taken into account.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents, including governor visits and minutes, improvement plans and the school's summary self-evaluation.
- The inspector triangulated a range of information relating to safeguarding. This included scrutinising the single central record, checking personnel files and reviewing records of multi-agency referrals. Logs and records for reporting racist incidents, behaviour and health and safety concerns were also checked.
- The inspector met with the school team (who are also leaders); spoke with some staff separately about safeguarding; interviewed the breakfast-club leader; and considered the views of staff widely through different inspection activities, including considering staff views through the staff survey.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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