

Sidmouth Church of England (VA) Primary School

55 Woolbrook Road, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 9XB

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Where gaps in pupils' knowledge are present, these are rapidly closing.
- Leaders have prioritised the importance of children learning to read from an early age. Children read age-appropriate texts with confidence and can answer questions about what they have read.
- Leaders engage parents and carers well in their children's education. Parents regularly help their children in class during the extended 'drop off' times in the morning.
- Pupils' behaviour across the school is a strength. Pupils are polite and courteous. They enjoy school and attendance is improving.
- Pupils feel safe and are safe. Staff report concerns about pupils' welfare well and leaders use this information to take proportionate action.
- Pupils make strong progress in writing. They learn to write for a range of purposes and apply vocabulary well. However, they are less confident when using punctuation.
- Children do not consistently access the full array of activities across the early years. On occasion, activities are not engaging to children and remain unused, particularly writing activities.
- Leaders have high expectations for all staff and pupils. Staff feel valued and benefit from high-quality professional development and training. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong.
- The early years provision is a rich and engaging place to learn. Children make good progress and apply what they have learned in a meaningful, contextual way.
- Pupils access a broad and balanced curriculum. They develop a secure understanding across all subjects, including foundation subjects such as history and science.
- Pupils access a rich and varied mathematics curriculum. They develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge through suitably challenging activities.
- Staff, at all levels, are passionate about the school. This contributes to the strong team spirit. Senior leaders are in the process of handing over subject leadership to new leaders, who will drive forward improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Representatives from the trust support the school well. They have an accurate evaluation of the schools' performance. However, their understanding of how well pupils make progress lacks precision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the early years to ensure that:
 - children’s physical development continues to develop so children’s writing and letter formation improves
 - activities and the learning environment consistently engage children so children make stronger progress from their starting points.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that:
 - middle leaders’ roles are effectively embedded, so they can monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility, resulting in improved outcomes for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils
 - leaders use information about what pupils know, can do and understand with more precision, particularly at trust level, so they can accurately evaluate the quality of the school’s performance and pupils’ rates of progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - pupils apply punctuation in their writing with greater accuracy, so pupils continue to make strong progress from their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The head of teaching and learning, ably supported by her leadership team, has worked tirelessly to bring about improvements. Over time, pupils' progress across key stage 2 has been poor, but current pupils' work does not reflect this. There is a strong sense of purpose that permeates the school. Learning is front and centre of leaders' work and this is paying off. Consequently, most pupils make strong progress from their starting points, across all subjects.
- Leaders have challenged underperformance without delay. They have not compromised pupils' education as they sought to ensure that there was consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. While most staff are relatively new to the profession, they are fully aware of leaders' high expectations and are happy in their roles. Consequently, while staff turbulence has been high in recent years, there is now a strong and highly skilled workforce in place.
- Leaders have high expectations of all staff and pupils. Leaders wasted no time to introduce a new strategy to promote positive behaviour. This has been effective in improving pupils' behaviour across the school. Leaders have been adamant that improving education across the school is a priority. They have created an energy and sense of purpose, which they direct towards achieving this goal. Staff overwhelmingly support leaders' vision and, as a team, they are highly effective in implementing this.
- Leaders ensure that pupils access a rich and varied curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about the order of the curriculum, so pupils can make links between what they have learned in one subject and apply it to another. As a result, pupils access the full range of foundation subjects, applying what they have learned in meaningful, contextual ways.
- Staff feel valued. They acknowledge the efforts of leaders to support their well-being by trying to manage workload. Staff feel they can hold honest conversations about the quality of their work and know where to go for support and training. Staff also recognise how hard their colleagues and leaders work, in the best interests of pupils.
- Parents are positive about the school. They state they have a strong idea about how well their children make progress and value how hard staff work to make sure the school is a warm, nurturing place to learn. While some are disappointed about historical pupils' progress, most parents support the work of leaders and the impact it is having.
- Leaders support newly qualified teachers well. Newly qualified teachers state they access high-quality training and professional development. Leaders encourage them to reflect on their own practice and provide ongoing support. Newly qualified teachers are already considering how they wish to develop in future leadership roles. Consequently, teachers new to the profession are supporting pupils' progress well.
- Leaders who oversee the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have effective systems in place to ensure high-quality provision. Pupils' targets are precise and leaders regularly review these to monitor progress. Leaders have provided appropriate training for staff and teachers know it is their

responsibility to ensure that pupils in their class with SEND are accessing a suitable curriculum, according to individual needs.

- Leaders have a clear understanding about what pupils know, can do and understand. They regularly review pupils' progress and put in place appropriate steps to prevent pupils falling behind. On occasion, some of these assessments are too cautious and underestimate what pupils can do. However, this does not impact on pupils' rates of progress.
- Middle leaders are passionate and enthusiastic about the school. Senior leaders have modelled how to be an effective leader, which has provided this new crop of leaders with a strong induction to their new roles. Going forward, middle leaders will require continued support as they begin to take sole responsibility for their area of school improvement.
- Leaders have successfully raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils across the school. They have achieved this through collaboration with colleagues, both inside and outside the trust, to help drive progress for these pupils. Leaders have a clear idea about pupils' barriers to learning and can demonstrate how they are overcoming these barriers. Leaders acknowledge that this work is not yet resulting in strong progress for all pupils, and steps are in place to continue this work.

Governance of the school

- Representatives from the trust, at all levels, have an accurate evaluation of the schools' quality of teaching and learning. They have supported the head of teaching and learning well. Despite concerns about pupils' historical progress, they have backed the vision of school leaders to bring about improvements. Over a short time, they have noted how well the school's fortunes have transformed and they have been on hand to support this journey of improvement.
- The trust has supported the head of teaching and learning through the appointment of a full-time parent support adviser. This has been an effective appointment, not only in the work to support parents, but also to not dilute leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Representatives from the trust have also engaged with other settings to share best practice, including in the use of the pupil premium.
- The use of information about what pupils know, can do and understand is not precise enough. Over time, representatives from the trust have been overly dependent on information about classes at the end of each key stage. In recent years, pupils' progress rather than attainment has been a concern. However, the focus on attainment has been a priority. As a result, representatives have been unable to ask suitably probing questions about the progress that all pupils make from their starting points.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all adults who wish to work at the school are subject to robust recruitment checks. Leaders store this information on the school's single central register. As a result, leaders only appoint staff who are suitable to work with children.

- Staff have a strong understanding of the responsibility to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff complete regular, ongoing training which keeps them up to date with both the school's expectations and statutory guidance. Leaders have introduced short, bitesize training to ensure that staff knowledge remains current. Consequently, staff are vigilant about safeguarding and routinely communicate concerns they have about pupils' welfare to designated leaders.
- Leaders take proportionate actions when concerns about pupils' welfare arise. They consider information from a range of sources, ranging from staff in school to the police, through Operation Encompass. Leaders pass on these concerns to the relevant external agencies to ensure that all pupils are safe from risk of harm.
- Leaders work well with families, providing early help for those that need this support. The parent support adviser has a strong understanding of the families she works with. She is well placed to offer guidance, including with improving pupils' attendance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers provide activities that closely match pupils' emerging needs. Teachers plan activities with their colleagues to ensure that there is consistency across classrooms and to also share ideas and best practice. Teachers are highly skilled in adapting activities, should pupils require further support or challenge. As a result, teachers effectively tailor activities to meet the varied needs of pupils, resulting in strong progress.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils in lessons. Pupils work hard and behave well. Teachers engage pupils well in their learning. Pupils work positively in class and know what teachers and support staff expect of them. Pupils present their work with pride and their workbooks demonstrate high regard for learning.
- In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving knowledge. Staff are highly skilled in assessing pupils' ongoing progress. During lessons, they act swiftly to provide further support or challenge, should pupils require it. Across all classes, of both singular and mixed-aged year groups, teachers ensure that pupils access the relevant, age-appropriate curriculum. Consequently, pupils access high-quality activities that support their mathematical understanding.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. The approach to teaching phonics is systematic and encourages pupils to apply what they have learned to read unfamiliar words and spell phonetically decodable words. Pupils have high-quality opportunities to apply this knowledge in their reading. Teachers provide appropriate reading books which match the sounds that pupils have been learning in class.
- Teachers promote a love of reading well across the school. Through the school's approach to teaching reading and developing pupils' comprehension, pupils are increasingly confident to talk about books they have read and their favourite authors. Pupils read regularly at school and home. However, records of pupils' reading at home often remain unchecked. While this has not demotivated pupils, their efforts to read regularly at home run the risk of being unnoticed.
- Staff engage parents well in their children's learning. Due to the school being split over

three separate sites, staff deemed it necessary to extend the morning 'drop off' time, allowing for parents with more than one child to get their children to school on time. Staff have capitalised on this and use this time to provide parents with a daily opportunity to work alongside their child to either respond to teachers' feedback or complete any unfinished work. These times are calm, focused and purposeful. Parents value these opportunities to celebrate their children's ongoing achievements while keeping up to date with their progress.

- Teachers deploy support staff effectively. Across the school, support staff work well with pupils to help them further their understanding. Support staff who run interventions for specific pupils have the suitable training to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities. As a result, support staff have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers provide pupils with high-quality opportunities to learn well across all subjects, including foundation subjects. Teachers plan activities that allow pupils to gain an in-depth understanding about what they are learning, for example when learning about Ancient Egyptians in history and animal adaptation in science.
- Staff have an increased awareness of those pupils who receive additional funding, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. In class, staff ensure that they are providing activities that are specific to pupils' individual targets. While this has secured improved progress for most pupils, some disadvantaged pupils' progress is still not enabling them to catch up with their peers.
- Teachers provide pupils with high-quality opportunities to develop their writing. The writing curriculum promotes pupils' progress well, enabling them to develop their knowledge across a range of fiction and non-fiction. Pupils enjoy these writing opportunities and their work is of a high standard. Teachers ensure that pupils have the knowledge they need to succeed when writing. However, pupils do not consistently apply punctuation well to their writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils contribute to, and demonstrate, the school's ethos: 'Aspire, flourish and achieve'. Pupils can eloquently describe the meaning behind the school ethos and can give examples about how it has influenced their activities in school.
- Pupils feel looked after, they feel that staff consider pupils' well-being and mental health well. Through 'mental health ambassadors', pupils can access support from peers or adults, if they ever feel down or upset. Pupils state that the importance placed on well-being and mental health contributes towards the positive attitudes they have towards school and learning.
- Pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils talk confidently about the 'dos and don'ts' when using the internet. They know why it is important to follow guidance provided by the school and consider this information when they access the internet.
- Pupils are clear about fundamental British values. The school's curriculum provides

opportunities for pupils to learn about key values, such as respect and tolerance.

- Pupils feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have any worries. They state that bullying is rare and if incidents occur, staff deal with them well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders' actions to reduce pupils' absence have had a positive impact on pupils' attendance. Over time, pupils' absence has reduced and is now in line with the national average. In addition, instances of persistent absence have also fallen below national averages. While disadvantaged pupils' absence remains higher than that of their peers, this is also reducing and is closer to the national average.
- Pupils conduct themselves well. They are polite and courteous, often holding doors for pupils and adults when travelling around communal areas. Pupils state they are clear about how staff expect them to behave and consider the new behaviour strategy to be a positive addition to their school.
- The school is a calm, purposeful environment. Pupils are adamant that behaviour is a strength of the school. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced, leading to fewer exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils make rapid and sustained progress. From their starting points, pupils are on track to meet or exceed expectations and are successfully building on their prior knowledge. Those pupils who were previously working below age-related expectations are showing signs of catching up, with some successfully closing the gap on their peers.
- Phonics is a high priority across the school. Leaders make clear the importance that children learn to read from an early age. In 2018, most pupils left Year 1 with the required reading capabilities to effectively decode unfamiliar words and learn to blend and segment sounds. Current pupils are demonstrating a strong phonics understanding and can apply this well to their reading and writing.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. Pupils access a rich, varied mathematics curriculum, which staff match well to pupils' emerging needs. Pupils who may be at risk of falling behind are promptly given further support. In addition, staff provide further challenge for those pupils who are demonstrating their capacity to access more difficult work. Pupils make strong progress in mathematics and relish tackling challenging learning.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of books they have read. Pupils, across all year groups, access a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Staff expect all pupils, regardless of their ability, to engage with high-quality texts. Pupils demonstrate their knowledge about what they have read by answering a series of focused questions. Pupils have positive attitudes towards reading and read widely and often, with a secure understanding about what they have read.
- Pupils with SEND access support that is closely matched to their needs. Pupils' targets

consider pupils' specific needs and staff set these with the aim of supporting pupils to make good progress. As a result, pupils with SEND access high-quality support and make strong progress from their starting points.

- Pupils make strong progress in writing. Pupils have high-quality opportunities to develop their writing across a range of genres. Pupils develop their knowledge about how to use vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing. They are confident when applying ambitious vocabulary to their writing. However, pupils' use of punctuation is not yet consistently strong.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making improved progress. Until recently, disadvantaged pupils made poor progress. However, some pupils are making accelerated progress to catch up with their peers. While this is not yet enabling all pupils to catch up, gaps in pupils' knowledge are closing quickly.
- Over time, pupils have made poor progress across key stage 2. Inspectors carefully considered this when conducting inspection activity. However, inspectors saw little correlation between historical outcomes and progress that current pupils are making. While there are gaps in some pupils' knowledge, particularly in upper key stage 2, these gaps are closing quickly.

Early years provision

Good

- The teaching of phonics is high priority across the early years provision. Staff prioritise children's early reading from an early age, acknowledging its importance. Children learn the sounds that letters make and apply these well in their writing. At this stage of the year, children are making strong progress and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Staff promote nursery rhymes and traditional tales. Children enthusiastically recite rhymes and can recall and describe the key events in a story. Staff skilfully design activities to further promote quality texts. Children have opportunities to 'fetch pails of water' like Jack and Jill, and 'hang out the clothes' like the maid from 'Sing a Song of Sixpence'. Children engage well in these activities and demonstrate an enthusiasm for stories and nursery rhymes.
- Staff use comprehensive and detailed assessments about what children know, can do and understand when they start the Reception Year. Staff use this information to provide activities that closely match children's emerging needs. As a result, from their starting points, children make strong progress.
- Children have a secure grasp of ambitious vocabulary. Staff actively promote the use of rich language across the setting, explaining to children the meaning of these exciting new words so they can learn to use them confidently and independently. For example, when describing a 'herby dough' mixture, children used the word 'aromatic'.
- Children have high-quality opportunities to develop number and shape, space and measures knowledge. Through a well-designed curriculum, children develop this knowledge in fun and meaningful contexts, for example through building towers or counting the number of seeds that they have planted in the garden. Children apply their knowledge well and in context.
- Staff engage parents well across the early years provision. Parents benefit from regular 'stay and play' events, as well as the daily opportunity to support their children during

the extended drop-off times.

- Children in the early years are safe. Adults supervise children well and have the appropriate training to maintain pupils' safety such as paediatric first aid training.
- The early years provision is engaging and promotes children's early development. However, on occasion, some activities, such as writing, remain unused by children because they would rather pursue other activities on offer. Consequently, children are not accessing the full breadth of what is on offer across the early years provision.
- Children apply their knowledge of phonics well in their writing. They spell words with increasing accuracy and in context, often in sentences. Children are attempting to join their writing from an early age, but this is hindered by poor letter formation. Children's physical development, particularly fine motor skills, is preventing them from forming their letters correctly and at a suitable size.

School details

Unique reference number	143183
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10088376

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

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	528
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Alex Walmsley
Headteacher	Claire Fegan
Telephone number	01395 514146
Website	www.sidmouth-primary.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@sidmouth-primary.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is split over three sites, Woolbrook Road, Vicarage Road and Manstone Avenue. Woolbrook Road accommodates pupils in key stage 2. Vicarage Road accommodates nursery-age children through to pupils in Year 2. Manstone Avenue accommodates children in Reception through to pupils in Year 2.
- Day to day, the head of teaching and learning leads the school. She is supported by two deputy headteachers and unit leaders who have responsibility for particular phases of education such as the early years, and key stage 1.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms, accompanied by school leaders, and considered current pupils' progress by considering pupils' workbooks across reading, writing, mathematics and the foundation subjects.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer, the executive head of teaching and learning and a range of directors and trustees.
- Inspectors considered school leaders' information about what pupils know, can do and understand and compared this with pupils' starting points. Inspectors evaluated the accuracy of this information by comparing this with work in pupils' books.
- The inspection team met with leaders across the school, including the head of teaching and learning, deputy headteachers, unit leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with those responsible for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the designated leader for safeguarding and the parent support adviser to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. The inspection team spoke with staff about their knowledge of safeguarding and their understanding of statutory guidance.
- Inspectors considered the 86 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 7 responses to the pupil survey and the 44 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Olford	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Nash	Ofsted Inspector

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