

# Inspection of Cutcombe Church of England First School

Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset TA24 7DZ

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Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in December 2008 under the relevant inspection framework at that time.

The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.

The school has not been inspected for 11 years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a very small school that serves a close-knit village community. Staff and parents work well together to support pupils' development. Pupils say that the school feels like a family. The school has strong links to the local church. This cements the school at the heart of village life.

Staff model good relationships based on the school's strong Christian values. Pupils see these values lived out by staff on a day-to-day basis. Pupils know that staff have high expectations of their behaviour and of their work.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school at playtime and lunchtime. They look after each other. If pupils feel lonely they are able to sit on the friendship bench. Other pupils will try to help by talking to them.

Pupils feel safe at school. They say that their teachers are always there to help them. This is true. Staff know their pupils very well and provide a high level of care for them. As a result, pupils are happy, content and proud of their school.

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

The school has been through an unsettling time in the last two years because of changes in senior leadership. The current interim headteacher has stabilised the school since she joined in July 2019. She asked the staff to reflect on the purpose of their work. She has renewed their vision for the future.

Leaders reviewed the curriculum at the end of last academic year. They made changes that have led to improvements in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' ability to compose stories in English lessons has improved this year. This is because staff have reflected on their approach. Teachers allow pupils time to talk through their ideas. Pupils enjoy writing. Even so, pupils' writing in other subjects is not as strong. The mathematics curriculum is well-structured and effective. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved in mathematics as a result of recent training.

Children learn to read from the moment they start in Reception. Early years staff have a structured programme for teaching phonics. Several older pupils read publicly in the local church on Sundays. This boosts their confidence as readers.

Leaders have steadily improved the curriculum in other subjects, such as history and geography. However, they accept that teachers' planning is not yet as effective in these subjects as in English and mathematics.

Pupils work well together in the two mixed-age classes. They learn the benefits of listening to each other, taking their turn and sharing. These behaviours help them to learn well.

The overall rate of pupils' attendance fluctuates through the year. This is because of the school's small size. One or two pupils' absence makes a big difference. Even so, over time, the rate of pupils' attendance is below average.

Year 3 pupils recently enjoyed a residential visit to Bristol with pupils from other first schools in the Exmoor area. This was an exciting experience that helped build their social skills.

Pupils sing beautifully. Each year, they get a chance to show off their skills at a cultural event hosted by a local middle school. This year it is the production of Aladdin.

The personal, social and health education curriculum provides clear guidance to pupils about what is right and wrong. However, curriculum plans have not been in place long enough to be able to evaluate the impact on pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive well-planned extra help. This support is effective. It enables these pupils to keep up with their peers.

Governors, the local authority and the diocese work well together to support the school. Staff morale has recovered following a difficult period. Nevertheless, the current headteacher is still serving in a temporary role and so some uncertainty remains.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher ensures that all staff are vigilant. She deals quickly and appropriately with any concerns about pupils' well-being or safety. Governors watch over the arrangements for safeguarding carefully. This has led to a strong culture of care for pupils at the school.

Staff teach pupils about risks such as keeping safe near busy roads or keeping safe around farms. Staff do this well. This builds pupils' confidence as they grow and become more independent of adults.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Curriculum plans in the foundation subjects are in place, but they are not yet detailed enough. As a result, teachers' planning in these subjects is not as precise

as in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that each foundation subject has a sufficiently detailed curriculum plan.

- Too many pupils miss out on learning because they are not attending school regularly enough. Leaders must ensure that the rate of pupils' attendance improves.
- Leaders have recently restructured the way the personal, social and health education curriculum is implemented. The new structure is in its infancy. Leaders should evaluate the new approach to understand its effectiveness.
- Governors have successfully led the school through an unsettled period. They must now consolidate the improvements that have been achieved in the current academic year by securing a sustainable solution for the senior leadership of this small school.

## How can I feed back my views?

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

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

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

## Further information

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

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

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123831
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111634
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Christopher Richards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Appleyard
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cutcombecofefirstschool.co.uk">www.cutcombecofefirstschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 December 2008

## Information about this school

- This is a Church of England voluntary-aided school in the diocese of Bath and Wells. The school serves families from the rural village of Wheddon Cross and the surrounding area of Exmoor.
- The school is part of the Moorland Federation. This is a federation of five first schools in the vicinity of Minehead that share the same governing body. The other schools in the federation are Dunster First School, Exford C of E First School, St Dubricius C of E VA School, and Timberscombe C of E First School.
- The most recent inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2019. This was a statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools (SIAMS). This inspection judged the effectiveness of the school's distinctive Christian character to be good.
- The current interim headteacher was appointed in June 2019. The previous longstanding headteacher resigned in December 2018.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- We met with the interim headteacher and one other senior leader. We met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. We held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority, the diocese of Bath and Wells and an adviser who provides school improvement guidance to the school.
- We did deep dives in mathematics, history, English and early reading. In each of these subjects, we met with teachers, considered curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and considered pupils' written work.
- We spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, scrutinised the school's safeguarding documentation and considered records of the pre-employment suitability checks the school makes on its staff.
- The previous 'outstanding' judgement reflected the school's overall effectiveness in December 2008 under the relevant inspection framework at that time. The new judgement of 'good' reflects the current inspection framework as well as any changes at the school since the last inspection.
- The school has not been inspected for 11 years, which is longer than the five-year maximum interval between inspections. Changes in school effectiveness may have happened at any point in that period. The long time between inspections is because the law changed in 2011; it made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Paul Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tracy French

Ofsted Inspector

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