

Inspection of Buckfastleigh Primary School

Bossell Road, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0DD

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 September 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Buckfastleigh Primary School is a welcoming environment where staff and pupils feel valued. Pupils are kind, polite and respectful towards adults and each other. Parents say that their child feels happy and safe at this school. They speak highly of the 'caring and nurturing support' staff provide.

Leaders' actions to improve pupils' behaviour have led to a calm, safe environment in which pupils are able to learn. Staff set clear expectations and respond appropriately to the few incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils understand the difference between bullying and minor disagreements with friends. Pupils enjoy school, and they attend regularly.

Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class. By the time most pupils leave key stage 1, they are ready for the next stage of their education. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the key stage 2 curriculum, including in English and mathematics. This means that too many pupils are not yet receiving a good quality of education.

Pupils across the school care for each other and form friendships across different classes through 'family' groups. Pupils make a positive contribution to their community. For example, they grow vegetables with the school gardener to share with families in their town.

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

Since his appointment in September 2019, the headteacher has built a strong team. Parents and carers recognise that the school has improved in recent years. The five values of belonging, curiosity, sustainability, creativity and empowerment are at the heart of the curriculum. The early years leader has used her expertise well to implement a comprehensive and inspiring early years curriculum. Nonetheless, the design and application of the school's curriculum beyond the early years is not yet routinely experienced by all pupils.

The development of the curriculum has been stalled by the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and staff changes. Subject leaders have improved the organisation of the curriculum in some subjects, such as geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE). However, in others, such as religious education (RE), the curriculum does not help pupils to know more and remember more.

The key stage 2 English curriculum is not developed well enough for those pupils who remain at the early stages of reading and writing. Pupils' handwriting and spelling are poor. Pupils are not getting the additional, specialist support they need to catch up. This is hampering their progress and preventing them from becoming fluent readers and writers.

In key stage 2, teachers do not ensure that the curriculum builds well enough on what pupils know and understand already. Learning is not planned as well as it should be. For example, the curriculum is not challenging enough for stronger mathematicians.

Leaders have developed a clear and consistent structure to teach phonics in the early years and key stage 1. Staff use assessment well to identify pupils who are falling behind. The additional support they receive is helping pupils to catch up. Staff share a range of stories, poems and rhymes with pupils every day. This helps to develop pupils' communication and language. The learning environment is rich with vocabulary to support pupils' spelling and writing.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly in recent years. This has resulted in most pupils demonstrating positive attitudes to their learning. They are enthusiastic and motivated to succeed. However, when the curriculum is not adapted well enough to support pupils with additional learning needs, they occasionally become distracted.

Leaders identify pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs quickly. They provide extra support for those who need it. This helps pupils to learn confidently alongside their peers. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not receiving the precise support they need. Learning activities are not consistently well matched to those pupils' needs. They are often too difficult. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn the important knowledge and skills they need to achieve success.

Despite the challenges that the national restrictions have presented, pupils have enjoyed many experiences to develop talents and interests. They debate social, spiritual and moral issues confidently and celebrate diversity. The school's 'question of the week' encourages deep reflection and consideration among pupils of all ages.

One of the reasons for the recent improvements lies in the trust's approach to school effectiveness. The members of the local hub, supported by the trust's director of primary education, understand the school's specific challenges. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide sound advice for school leaders. Consequently, school leaders are well placed to improve further the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have received suitable training so that they are vigilant to signs that pupils might be at risk of harm. Staff use the school's safeguarding system well to report concerns. Leaders keep appropriately detailed records of the actions they have taken as a result, and they follow up where necessary. Leaders work in partnership with a wide range of external agencies. This ensures that families in need of support receive help in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is at various stages of development. In some foundation subjects, the curriculum does not develop pupils' knowledge and skills well enough. Consequently, pupils have gaps in their understanding. Leaders need to implement an effective and ambitious curriculum in every subject.
- Teachers do not adapt the curriculum well enough to meet the needs of some pupils with SEND. Sequences of lessons are often too difficult. Consequently, pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should. Teachers should ensure that their curriculum planning supports the additional learning needs of pupils with SEND so that these pupils reach their full potential.
- Leaders have not prioritised reading for older pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Consequently, they are falling further behind. Leaders need to ensure that these pupils are provided with additional, high-quality reading and writing support so that they catch up quickly.
- Teaching in some subjects is not based on a secure assessment of what pupils already know. For example, in mathematics, lesson sequences are not challenging enough. Leaders need to ensure that staff use appropriate checks to plan a demanding curriculum that builds on what pupils already know and provides complex challenges for pupils to grapple with.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

Unique reference number	136562
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10200956
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Eddie Brown
Website	www.buckfastleigh.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes since the last inspection, in 2017. Many staff have left the school, including the headteacher. The school joined the Westcountry Schools Trust in spring 2020. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2019.
- Leaders introduced a new class structure in September 2021. Children in the Reception Year and pupils in Year 1 are now taught in one class.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, the SEND leader, the early years leader, teachers and the trust's director of primary education.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors, and talked to the chair of trustees by telephone.
- Inspectors held meetings with early career teachers and an early career mentor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and geography. Inspectors also considered curriculum plans for French, PSHE and RE.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning, heard pupils read to an adult and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents, such as leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, a trust quality assurance report, support plans for pupils with SEND and headteachers' reports to governors.
- Inspectors reviewed records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance, exclusions, restraints and bullying.
- Inspectors considered how the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. Inspectors met with the designated leader for safeguarding, reviewed a range of documentation and talked to staff and pupils.
- An inspector visited the before- and after-school provision to check safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors gathered the views of 46 parents through the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 29 free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with parents on the playground, considered an email from a parent and held a telephone conversation with another parent.

Inspection team

Sue Costello, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Shirley

Ofsted Inspector

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