

Inspection of a good school: Dunsford Community Academy

Dunsford, Exeter, Devon EX6 7DD

Inspection date: 17 May 2022

Outcome

Dunsford Community Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is at the heart of the community. Pupils get on well together at this friendly, village school. They care deeply about each other. Pupils feel safe and enjoy their time at Dunsford. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good. Pupils are adamant that bullying never happens. They are confident that if it did, staff would deal with it immediately.

Pupils develop strong moral values. They know right from wrong. Pupils understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and know what makes a positive relationship. Staff strive for pupils to be the best they can be in all that they do. They have pupils' best interests at heart. Staff have high aspirations for all pupils.

Pupils enjoy the wider opportunities beyond the classroom. For example, many pupils learn to play a musical instrument. This has led to much success in local music competitions. Older pupils enjoy taking part in the civic award. Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

The school has been through a period of considerable change in staffing. The trust and school leaders have managed these changes well. Nevertheless, this turbulence, coupled with the pandemic, has hampered some curriculum improvement work. The new headteacher is fully aware that some areas of the curriculum can be further strengthened. This work is well underway. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes.

Reading is a central feature of the curriculum. Leaders place great importance on ensuring that pupils enjoy reading. More recently, leaders have invested in providing pupils with new reading books. Staff have thought carefully about what books pupils need to experience to help them to read well. Pupils enjoy the range of books that are on offer. As soon as children enter the Nursery Year, staff promote a love of reading. Children quickly master the sounds that letters make. Books that pupils read are closely matched

to the sounds that they know. Older pupils recognise that reading is the gateway to the curriculum. The very large majority of pupils read well. However, a small minority of pupils who are behind with their reading are not catching up quickly enough. This is because some staff do not have the expertise that they need.

In some subjects, such as mathematics, the curriculum is well considered. Leaders provide clear guidance to staff about what pupils must learn and when. As soon as children join the Nursery Year, they learn the fundamentals of number. Staff plan well-thought-out activities. This prepares children well for the Reception Year. Further up the school, teachers sequence lessons that build upon key concepts. They ensure that pupils know and remember what they have learned before they plan new learning. This ensures that pupils do not have any gaps in their knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress through the curriculum well. Expert support and well-considered learning ensure that these pupils are having their needs met. However, this is not the case for all pupils. As with reading, where pupils find some learning difficult to grasp, additional support is not as effective as it could be.

A small minority of older pupils say that on the odd occasion some pupils can disturb their learning. Pupils say that staff manage any disruption well. Concerns about low-level disruption are uncommon in younger pupils. Leaders feel that some pupils' behaviour declined when they returned to school following the pandemic restrictions. Consequently, leaders have introduced new systems for managing behaviour. The new approach is having a positive impact.

Leaders are conscious that pupils need to learn about life outside of the local area. The curriculum for personal development prepares pupils to understand the complexities of society. Through visitors and trips, pupils learn about different cultures and the world around them.

Local governors understand their responsibilities well. They have an accurate understanding of the school. Every member of staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey said they are proud to work at the school.

The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, would recommend the school. One parent captured the views of many when saying, 'My children are thriving here.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate recruitment checks are in place. Staff training is relevant. Staff know their responsibilities well. They are alert to signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Pupils say that they trust adults to listen and help with any concerns they may have. Leaders are persistent in securing any support that pupils and their families may need.

Pupils learn how to stay safe through the curriculum. Many external organisations visit the school to help pupils understand how to stay safe. Pupils know what to do should they feel at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There has been insufficient professional development for some staff. This has hampered their ability to support some pupils who need additional help to catch up. Senior leaders need to ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to improve the quality of the curriculum.
- Leaders have made recent changes to further strengthen some subjects in the curriculum. However, some of these changes are very recent. Therefore, leaders are not fully aware of their impact. Leaders need to ensure that these changes are improving pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Dunsford Community Primary School, to be good in September 2016.

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	145347
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10227706
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	91
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Vaughton
Headteacher	Jacqueline Stephens
Website	www.dunsford-lap.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Learning Academy Partnership, a multi-academy trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Dunsford Community Academy converted to become an academy school in February 2018. When its predecessor school, Dunsford Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school provides nursery provision for two- and three-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair from the local hub governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.

- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated and deputy designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Lees

Ofsted Inspector

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