

Inspection of West Exe School

Hatherleigh Road, Exeter EX2 9JU

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

The values of 'community, opportunity and success' are evident throughout the culture of the school. There are high expectations and leaders are ambitious for pupils. This means pupils are ready for their learning and routines are well established.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They are proud of their learning. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities for pupil leadership, such as being a member of the school parliament, a sports leader or a pupil mentor. Pupils also lead many groups, such as the 'equality for all' group.

Pupils feel safe in school. When bullying happens, it is reported and dealt with. Pupils learn about respectful behaviour and healthy relationships. They know who to speak to if they are seeking advice and support. Pupils feel very well informed about looking after their mental health. They know what resources they can access if they need to. A few girls say they hear derogatory language used towards them. When it is reported it is followed up, and leaders actively encourage pupils to speak out.

Pupils have a broad range of opportunities through the elective programme. This includes joining the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils are proud of their sports teams, although girls feel they have fewer opportunities to compete.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious and challenging curriculum for all pupils. Parts of the curriculum have led the way, in a trust-wide common approach. All subjects are mapped out coherently across five years. A Year 8 foundation option programme offers a breadth of courses. Teachers model learning effectively and plan for pupils to revisit the knowledge they need. Lessons are taught in a 12-week cycle with regular assessment points. This helps pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Teachers make sure pupils read a wide range of literature. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read are supported through effective reading programmes. As a result, they quickly develop confidence. Leaders work with primary schools to understand the needs of pupils moving to the school. A robust transition process helps pupils settle in quickly. For example, pupils who need help with reading are supported before they join the school.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour. Lessons are orderly and pupils focus on their learning. Pupils are proud of their work. They rise to the challenge set by the curriculum in each subject. A minority of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders recognise this and they are taking action. Even so, the attendance rate of some disadvantaged pupils is still too low.

The great majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. However, occasionally, the support offered to these pupils in classrooms is not planned in sufficient detail. When this happens, they do not learn as effectively as they otherwise would.

The West Exe Baccalaureate programme includes the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and the religious education curriculum. This is delivered by subject specialists. Leaders have consulted pupils to develop the programme. Consequently, pupils learn content at a time that is relevant to them. Pupils have regular opportunities to debate and consider moral and social issues. For example, all pupils take part in a Model United Nations activity.

In key stage 3, pupils attend an elective subject as part of their wider enrichment. This includes subjects such as Greek mythology, first aid and additional foreign languages. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they would like to have more choice about which subjects they do. A comprehensive careers programme runs from Year 7 to Year 11, with employer visits planned through the curriculum.

Leaders provide a programme of professional development that gives staff time to develop their subject specialism. All teaching staff participate in a coaching programme. As a result, there is a consistent approach to the delivery of the curriculum.

Senior leaders have recently changed the leadership structure in the school. Leaders understand their new roles and responsibilities. The trust provides a supportive role in developing leadership. The school benefits from working collaboratively with other local trust schools. The school has been through a period of positive change. Senior leaders are mindful that there has been some resistance to the changing culture. Leaders work with pupils, parents and the community to understand this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has high visibility across the school. Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable and effective. They are easily identified through their pink lanyards. Staff training is frequent and comprehensive. Staff are knowledgeable and diligent in their duty.

Leaders work with other agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils receive the support and care they need. Pupils know how to stay safe and keep safe online. They learn about healthy relationships and consent.

Pupils' mental health and well-being are priorities. As well as being themes of the curriculum, there are many resources pupils can access, such as a well-being room and a 'not alone' café.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers sometimes do not use information about pupils' individual needs to support them effectively. This hampers their learning, particularly those pupils with SEND. Leaders need to ensure that teachers use the information they receive about pupils to implement the curriculum consistently well for all pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils attend less well than their peers. Leaders are responding to the challenge of attendance. Leaders now need to have a more coherent, stepped approach in their strategy to tackle attendance and so ensure greater impact of their work.

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

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| Unique reference number | 145404 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10227726 |
| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,152 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Andy Mulcock |
| Headteacher | Mrs Julie Fossey |
| Website | www.westexe.devon.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- West Exe School is part of the Ted Wragg Trust. It joined in March 2018.
- The school uses four alternative providers. This includes two registered alternative providers and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirement of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives into English, mathematics, history, art and technology. In each subject, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work

and held discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils in both key stages. Inspectors also visited assembly, tutor time and the reading programme.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They held meetings with the designated leader for safeguarding, and leaders responsible for behaviour and attendance, and the curriculum, as well as curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met teachers who are at an early point in their teaching careers.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally around the school site and from all age groups.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies, plans and record-keeping for safeguarding, behaviour management, attendance, careers education, advice and guidance, and relationships, sex and health education.
- The lead inspector reviewed and considered 169 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. They also considered 171 free-text responses and letters received during the visit.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body, including the chair of governors, and representatives from the trust.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Jon Webb | Ofsted Inspector |
| Benjamin Houghton | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alison Naylor | Ofsted Inspector |
| Lydia Pride | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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