

# Inspection of a good school: Culmstock Primary School

Culmstock, Cullompton, Devon EX15 3JP

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Inspection date: 14 July 2022

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

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

Despite new leaders' high ambition for all pupils, the quality of education is not good enough. As a result, pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they could.

Pupils are adamant that bullying does not happen. They say they always have an adult available to talk to if they have a concern. Pupils feel safe in school. They get on well together and enjoy their time at school. Pupils are happy and appreciate the changes that are starting to take shape. The large majority of parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, classrooms are calm and social times are harmonious. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of what makes a positive relationship.

Leaders encourage pupils to make a difference in their community and beyond. Pupils support many local events and national charities. For example, they recently organised a cake sale following their learning about the war in Ukraine.

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

The new executive headteacher and governing body are beginning to have a meaningful impact. They, alongside the local authority, know there is still work to do to improve the quality of education. However, staff changes and the COVID-19 pandemic have slowed this work. Nonetheless, their evaluation of the school is not accurate. The checks on the implementation of plans for improvement have not been rigorous enough. As a result, some areas of the curriculum are not as strong as leaders believe.

Reading is one of leaders' top priorities. They have invested in promoting a love of reading. Pupils enjoy story times with staff and the range of books available. Leaders have thought carefully about how to use whole-class books to support pupils' learning in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders identified that the previous phonics scheme was not fit for purpose. As a result, they introduced a new early reading curriculum. In the Reception class, there are early signs that this is starting to have a positive impact on children's ability to read. Nevertheless, some elements of the curriculum need to improve further. The books that pupils read do not always match the sounds that they know. This is because checks on pupils' knowledge are not precise enough, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This hampers some pupils' ability to catch up and read confidently.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. They explain their learning and use mathematical vocabulary correctly. However, checks on what pupils know are not precise enough. In some cases, pupils complete work that is not well matched to their ability. This is because staff do not routinely adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, including pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils are not securing important knowledge before moving on to new learning. In turn, this leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge.

As a result of staff changes, some subject leadership is at an early stage of development. Consequently, checks on the implementation of the curriculum have not been robust enough. This is because new subject leaders do not yet have the expertise they need to improve the curriculum further.

Pupils' personal development is strong. Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to develop important life skills. For example, older pupils take part in the 'Exmoor Challenge'. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about society beyond Culmstock. Through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the religious education curriculums, pupils learn about other cultures and challenges in the world today. Pupils have strong views on equality. They know right from wrong.

Leaders prioritise staff workload and staff appreciate the support from leaders. For example, leaders purposefully use some outside agencies to provide extra-curricular provision for pupils. This is to support staff with their workload. All staff who completed Ofsted's survey say they are proud to work at the school.

In discussion with the executive headteacher and head of school, the inspectors agreed that phonics, assessment and subject leadership may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and have up-to-date safeguarding knowledge. They know the signs to look out for and what actions to take should they feel that a pupil is at risk of harm. In addition, should pupils or their families need any support, leaders ensure that they get it.

Leaders make certain that through the PSHE and computing curriculums pupils learn how to stay safe online. Pupils know what to do should they feel at risk of harm.

Record-keeping and recruitment of new members of staff is robust. Governors assure themselves that the school's safeguarding systems are fit for purpose.

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

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

- Leaders have made recent improvements to the teaching of phonics. However, some pupils, including pupils with SEND, are not catching up as quickly as they could. This is because gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified precisely enough. Too often, pupils read books that do not match their phonics knowledge. Leaders must use suitable checks to ensure that books match the sounds that pupils know.
- There are inconsistencies in the approach to assessment. In some subjects, systems for checking what pupils know and remember are not precise enough. This leads to some pupils having work that is not well matched to their ability. Senior leaders need to ensure that systems for checking what pupils know and understand provide teachers and subject leaders with the information they need to plan the curriculum for all pupils.
- Leaders' self-evaluation does not accurately reflect the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, leaders have an overly generous view of the school. Leaders need to be more rigorous in their checks on how well the curriculum is being implemented to enable pupils to reach their full potential.
- Subject leadership needs to be strengthened further. Subject leaders' checks are not precise enough in ensuring that the curriculum is being implemented effectively. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders develop their expertise in monitoring and evaluation so that they can provide effective support to teachers.

## **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 school to be good in November 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113071
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10205767
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	141
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Charlotte Martin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Francis
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.culmstock-primary.devon.sch.uk">www.culmstock-primary.devon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 and 16 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school uses one alternative provider.
- There has been a change of executive headteacher and several new governors since the last inspection.
- The school is part of the Culm Valley Federation.

## 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 executive headteacher, head of school, curriculum leaders, teaching staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. 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.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Carl Thornton

Ofsted Inspector

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