

# Inspection of a good school: Combe St Nicholas Church of England VA Primary School

Combe St Nicholas, Chard, Somerset TA20 3NG

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Inspection date:

21 September 2022

## **Outcome**

Combe St Nicholas Church of England VA Primary School continues to be a good school.

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

This is a welcoming village school which is at the heart of the community. Parents say their children thrive here. The Christian ethos is an important part of the school's distinctiveness. Pupils enjoy many activities beyond the classroom, such as residential trips, art club, cookery and musical performances.

The 'Combe St Nicholas pathway' provides clear and ambitious expectations for every aspect of school life. Pupils understand these and are proud to attend this school. Staff encourage pupils to contribute to the wider life of the school. This includes fundraising for a range of charities. As they move up to the older years, many pupils strive to become a house captain or a buddy for new starters to the school.

Pupils feel safe and know whom they can talk to if they have a concern. There is a calm and friendly atmosphere during playtimes. Pupils interact positively with their peers and are respectful towards the adults supervising them. In lessons, most pupils are focused and show a positive attitude to their learning. Bullying is rare. If it does occur, leaders take swift and effective action.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The project-based approach has been carefully designed to ensure coverage of the national curriculum while being adaptable for mixed-age classes. The knowledge pupils need to learn has been sequenced thoughtfully, with regular opportunities planned in to check what pupils know. Teachers use this information to adapt teaching, including making changes to groups and catch-up support to address any gaps or misconceptions. Staff know pupils well and make personalised and appropriate adaptations where required. In lessons, pupils with SEND are well supported and their needs are met. Children in the early years also benefit from a broad curriculum

which mirrors the experience of older pupils. For example, in history, they explore the idea of 'past' and 'present' and focus on using challenging vocabulary which helps to prepare them for their future studies.

Leaders prioritise reading and it is an important part of the culture of the school. They have created a literary canon of recommended reads for pupils, including a range of diverse texts of different forms and genres. Pupils across the school talk enthusiastically about enjoying story times with their teachers. There is a consistent phonics scheme in place and the progress of all pupils is carefully tracked. Children in Reception Year start their phonics journey as soon as they join the school. This gives them a secure knowledge of sounds and allows them to move on quickly to develop their fluency and comprehension in reading. However, not all staff across the school have received the specific training to enable them to support the chosen early reading programme.

Most pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. However, some pupils lose focus from their work, particularly when teachers do not explain subject content clearly enough. These pupils can also be overly reliant on waiting for support before they continue with their work. Outside of lessons, pupils are well-mannered and move around the school sensibly and purposefully. They take turns in play and, as one pupil said, 'We look out for each other, especially if someone is new.' In the early years foundation stage, there are clear routines and strong relationships with staff. This helps children to settle confidently into school life from a young age.

Pupils are positive when talking about their learning across different curriculum areas, including the personal, social and health education they receive. They understand what British values are and why they are important. Older pupils talk passionately about the work they have done in celebration of the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II. Pupils enjoy being part of a house system. They say it helps them to learn about the highs and lows of competition.

Staff, including early career teachers, say they are well supported by leaders. They comment that their well-being is always considered by leaders and governors when new initiatives are introduced. They feel part of a collective purpose. As several new staff have recently joined, this helps to provide a smooth transition for staff and pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils well. This allows them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. They then act quickly to secure the necessary support that pupils need, including working with outside agencies if required.

There are robust systems and processes in place for the safe recruitment of staff. Leaders understand their responsibility to ensure that all staff engage with regular, high-quality training around safeguarding.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in their day-to-day lives. This includes online safety and an awareness of cyber-bullying. Pupils also learn about healthy relationships at an age-appropriate level. There are clear and detailed policies in place to protect pupils.

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

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

- In some areas of the curriculum, adults do not always present subject matter clearly enough when recapping prior knowledge or introducing new learning. This leads to some pupils losing focus and not completing work to the best of their ability. Leaders should ensure that all staff deliver clear instructions and model their expectations consistently to pupils so they can learn effectively.
- Not all staff have received full training in the school's adopted phonics programme. This means that some staff do not have all the knowledge to effectively support pupils in the development of their reading. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive full, timely training to support the effective implementation of the school's chosen early reading phonics programme.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

## **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.

## 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>	123828
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240735
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rosie Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Maxwell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.combestnicholascofeschool.co.uk">www.combestnicholascofeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Combe St Nicholas is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection took place in December 2019.
- The school has an Early Years Centre with provision for pupils over the age of two.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders and a group of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to consider how well the school identifies pupils who are at risk and engages with external services. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the survey for pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Kelly Olive, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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