

Inspection of Axbridge Church of England First School Academy

Moorland Street, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2BA

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Ofsted has not previously inspected Axbridge Church of England First School Academy as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming and inclusive school. They talk confidently about the school's values and Christian ethos. Pupils understand how these values help them to be compassionate, kind and friendly. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive. They talk about the visibility of the new headteacher and the high levels of care and attention that staff show to pupils.

The headteacher and his staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Pupils understand the 'golden rules' that are in place and follow them well. This starts in the early years where children listen to instructions, are respectful and play well with one another.

Pupils feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it were to happen, they are confident that adults would deal with it quickly.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer to them, such as running, Spanish, art and dance. They are proud of the many opportunities they have to become 'buddies', 'digital leaders' and members of the 'eco team'. Pupils say these roles help them to develop their confidence and to set a positive example to others.

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

Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. They have created a curriculum that is designed well.

Leaders prioritise reading. They have recently implemented a new phonics scheme. This is making a difference. All staff benefit from the training they receive to teach phonics and reading well. Children begin phonics as soon as they start school. Books match the sounds that pupils are learning, which helps them to gain confidence. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to help them to catch up quickly. Pupils read a wide range of texts and do so with increasing accuracy and fluency as they move through the school.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned and carefully sequenced. Teachers plan learning well to meet the needs of all pupils. This starts in the early years. Children use their knowledge of early number to confidently describe number patterns. Teachers ensure that pupils routinely practise important mathematical skills. This enables pupils to secure and deepen their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

While leaders have put in place a well-planned curriculum that sets out the important knowledge that pupils need to know, the implementation of this curriculum is not as effective in some subjects as in others. Some teachers do not

routinely check what pupils know well enough before moving on to new learning. Future learning does not take into account what pupils remember over time. For example, in geography, children in the early years talk confidently about the features of their school and use this knowledge well to create maps. However, some older pupils cannot make connections to what they have learned before about the oceans and continents, or talk in detail about geographical terms.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils with SEND can achieve. They work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the help they need. Pupils' plans are precise and regularly reviewed. All pupils with SEND access a broad and balanced curriculum.

Pupils display positive attitudes towards their learning. They are polite and well mannered. Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They particularly enjoy using the play equipment, which helps them to keep active. Across the school, disruptions are rare. As a result, the school is calm and orderly.

Pupils' wider personal development is well planned. They understand what it means to be a good friend and the importance of treating everyone equally. Pupils develop their sense of character by planting trees in the local area and raising money for charities.

Governors, including those from the trust, know the school well. They carry out their duties effectively. Staff, including those who are new to the school, comment on the way they work well as a team. They appreciate the way in which the new headteacher has brought about positive changes and is considerate of their workload. All staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure there is a clear safeguarding culture across the school. They provide staff with up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff know how to identify any signs of concern and to report them quickly because of this. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help they need. They carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the real and online world. They understand the importance of not sharing personal details with strangers and ignoring 'pop-ups'.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not check well enough what pupils remember. Subsequent learning does not take into account pupils' prior knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not build their knowledge well over time. This slows their progress across the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that teachers check what pupils know and remember across all subjects, and use this to inform future learning.

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

Unique reference number	138763
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10229010
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Kirkup
Headteacher	Dominic Shillabeer
Website	www.axbridgefirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Axbridge Church of England First School Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Axbridge Church of England First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of The Wessex Learning Trust.
- The school has provision for two-year olds.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. The most recent section 48 inspection was in July 2018 where the school was judged to be outstanding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of staff, members of the local governing body and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. The lead inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Baillie

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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