

Inspection of Dulverton Junior School

Barns Close West, Dulverton, Somerset TA22 9EE

Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Dulverton Junior School. It is a place that welcomes all. Leaders strongly promote the school's values of thankfulness, compassion, courage, forgiveness, friendship and respect. Pupils talk about the importance of these. They develop their character through opportunities beyond the classroom, such as rock climbing and raft building.

However, the school has been through a difficult period. There have been several changes of leadership. The curriculum has been through many changes. The quality of education has suffered as a result. Pupils' learning is disjointed. Leaders have introduced a more coherent curriculum, but it is early days.

Leaders have simplified the behaviour policy so that staff and pupils understand it better. Consequently, most pupils behave well in class and at social times. For example, they cooperate well together in group activities. For a small number of pupils whose behaviour is not in line with leaders' expectations, staff manage these pupils well. Pupils say that if bullying occurs, then adults will resolve it.

Most parents have positive views about Dulverton. They appreciate leaders' improving communication with them. They would like greater clarity about the future direction of the school.

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

Turbulence in leadership has produced a lack of direction in recent years. Staff have received mixed messages about the curriculum. This has resulted in a decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection.

However, current leaders have stopped the decline. With support from the local authority, senior leaders have quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They, along with governors, have a realistic view about the current quality of education. Leaders are aware of staff workload and consider this in their development plans.

Leaders have prioritised the most urgent issues. The quality of education is beginning to improve. Governors challenge leaders to make sure the upward trend continues. Nevertheless, some subject leads do not know how well the wider curriculum is being implemented. This means weaknesses in these subjects have not been addressed.

Leaders have planned a clearly sequenced and ambitious curriculum. They have taken account of the school's context in doing so. There is a clear focus on pupils learning more about the world beyond Dulverton. Nevertheless, the implementation of the curriculum is inconsistent. Teachers do not adhere to the curriculum well

enough. In some subjects, such as geography, they do not teach the agreed content that pupils should learn. This means pupils do not build on their knowledge over time in the way leaders intend.

Leaders are determined to raise expectations about what pupils can learn. The reading curriculum ensures that pupils read high-quality texts. This deepens their understanding of increasingly challenging books. However, in some subjects, teachers do not take into account what pupils can already do well enough. This means that work is not always well matched to pupils' needs. It is often too easy. Pupils can learn more than they are currently showing.

Many pupils join the school with gaps in their phonic knowledge. Leaders have implemented a phonics programme to help pupils catch up rapidly. They have ensured that all staff are trained in reading. This means staff provide clear support for those pupils who fall behind. As a result, pupils learn to read with increasing fluency.

Leaders have established an inclusive ethos. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. This includes those pupils who join the school mid-year. Well-trained support staff help ensure pupils' needs are met. Pupils access the same broad and balanced curriculum as their peers.

Leaders have started to create a more cohesive personal development curriculum. They promote pupils' spiritual awareness through regular assemblies. Pupils learn leadership skills through being house captains. Leaders know that pupils need to deepen their knowledge further about other faiths and cultures. They have made a start, for example through celebrating Black History Month. However, there is more to do.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know pupils and their families well. They record any concerns they have in a timely manner. Leaders act upon these and make referrals to the local authority as appropriate. They work with multi-agencies to help families get the support they need.

Leaders make thorough checks on staff and visitors. Governors make regular checks on safeguarding procedures through visits to the school.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and in the locality. For example, they are aware of stranger danger.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always enact the curriculum as leaders expect. As a result, pupils do not learn the knowledge that has been identified in the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that pupils learn the key knowledge identified in the curriculum.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough. Consequently, pupils are often given tasks that are too easy and do not build on what they already know. Leaders need to ensure that teachers take into account what pupils already know so that pupils build on their knowledge sequentially.
- The personal development curriculum is at the early stages of development. As a result, pupils have limited knowledge of other faiths and cultures in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that the personal development curriculum means pupils learn and remember more about faiths and cultures in modern Britain.

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	123871
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10241770
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bill Gash and Kate Northern
Headteacher	Keith Mansell
Website	www.dulvertonjuniorschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Exmoor Federation.
- The executive headteacher took up post in January 2022.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to the governing body and to the senior leadership team.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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 executive headteacher and other school and federation leaders, staff, pupils, governors and two representatives from Somerset local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 read to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documents, including records of safeguarding checks carried out on staff. Inspectors considered how well leaders act on concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding practices.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke to parents at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Bissett

Ofsted Inspector

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