

Inspection of a good school: Dolton Church of England Primary School

The Square, Dolton, Winkleigh, Devon EX19 8QF

Inspection date: 10 January 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Dolton School place helping pupils learn how to be respectful members of society at the heart of their work. They contribute well to their local community and beyond. Leaders want pupils to do well. However, they have not ensured that pupils learn as well as they could. The curriculum does not support pupils to build their knowledge well enough.

Pupils behave well. They are kind to each other. Bullying is rare. Pupils have confidence in staff to help them if they have any worries. Pupils learn about the different types of bullying. They know the signs to look out for. Pupils enjoy learning. They show positive attitudes to their work and encourage others to do the same.

Leaders provide a range of extra-curricular clubs for pupils. These include cookery, dance and football. They give pupils opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Pupils take part in residential visits. Leaders carefully consider how pupils will develop their self-esteem and independence.

Most parents and carers have positive views of the school. They appreciate the nurture and care that pupils receive. However, some parents feel that communication could be better.

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

The curriculum is not ambitious enough for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have not identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn, especially in foundation subjects. Pupils are not able to build on what they already know to deepen their knowledge.

Pupils do not have enough opportunities to revisit important learning. Leaders do not give enough consideration to how the curriculum is broken down into small steps to support pupils' learning. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they could. Some pupils have gaps in their understanding. This makes it hard for them to know and remember more of the curriculum.

Pupils enjoy reading. Leaders encourage pupils to read widely and often. The library contains a range of books that reflect different cultures. Pupils have regular opportunities to listen to adults reading aloud. Books that adults share with pupils are carefully chosen to cover a range of text types. However, the recent introduction of a new approach to phonics is not yet having enough impact on how well pupils learn to read. Some staff do not understand the phonics programme well enough. Leaders have provided training for staff to increase their phonics subject knowledge. However, they have not checked closely enough that this has the necessary impact on the delivery of the phonics programme. Leaders know that some pupils have significant gaps in their phonics knowledge. Their actions to support pupils who fall behind are not considered carefully and do not happen with enough urgency.

Leaders provide training that helps teachers to identify pupils with SEND. Pupils receive personalised support. Leaders check regularly that pupils' targets and the support they receive are appropriate so that they can access the same curriculum as their peers.

Mutual respect is a feature of the school. Classrooms are calm and learning is rarely disturbed by poor behaviour. 'Character development plans' identify pupils' needs effectively and help them to access the full curriculum. Staff have a common approach to helping pupils understand and reflect on their own behaviour. Pupils know how their actions impact others. They consider the school to be a friendly place. Pupils who join the school feel welcome and part of the team.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their character. Pupils know the importance of self-awareness. They take part in 'change maker challenges' each term to experience making a difference to the local community. This gives pupils valuable experience of taking responsibility and having a positive impact on others. Pupils hold roles of responsibility at social times. They take pride in ensuring that all pupils can access activities and support pupils to resolve fallouts. Pupils celebrate and appreciate differences. They show sensitivity to pupils who have different needs to their own. Pupils feel that this is an inclusive school where everyone feels valued.

Staff feel well supported and valued by leaders. They say that leaders consider their well-being and workload when making decisions about improving the school. Leaders provide time for staff to embed new ideas. Staff feel able to ask for help and guidance. They appreciate the links leaders create with other schools in the trust as a further source of support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe. They learn about important aspects of keeping safe through the curriculum, including how to keep safe online. Leaders deliver regular safeguarding training. This makes sure that all staff know how to recognise and report concerns about pupils. Concerns are recorded promptly. Leaders take prompt action to get help for pupils and their families.

Leaders carefully consider safeguarding when recruiting new staff. They check that staff are suitable to work with children and record these checks with accuracy. Staff understand the whistle-blowing policy. They seek the support of other professionals for advice and guidance where relevant.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not implement the phonics programme well enough. Their actions to support pupils who fall behind are not well considered. Consequently, some pupils have significant gaps in their phonics knowledge. Leaders must ensure that all staff have secure phonics subject knowledge to be able to support pupils to learn to read well.
- Leaders have not identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn, especially in foundation subjects. As a result, pupils do not build on what they already know. Leaders need to identify the precise knowledge pupils need to learn. This will help pupils to know more and remember more over time.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to regularly revisit learning. As a result, they do not build knowledge as well as they could. Some pupils have gaps in their understanding. Leaders need to provide opportunities for pupils to revisit key parts of learning so that they remember it over time.

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 predecessor school, Dolton Church of England Primary School, to be good in July 2013.

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	145770
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256727
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gill Marlow
Headteacher	Samantha Drew
Website	www.clintonanddolton.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2019 with a good outcome.
- There is provision for two- and three-year olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, pupils, governors and representatives from the trust.

- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding leader. The inspector also spoke with staff, governors and pupils, and evaluated record-keeping and staff training.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, and comments made by parents online during the inspection. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The headteacher was not present for the second half of the inspection, including the final team meeting.

Inspection team

Jane Dennis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Bray

Ofsted Inspector

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