

Inspection of The Clinton Church of England Primary School

Merton, Okehampton, Devon EX20 3EQ

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Children love attending The Clinton. They skip enthusiastically into classes.

Leaders have invested significantly, particularly in developing pupils' character and providing support to families. Together, these are working exceptionally well to develop thoughtful and polite children. Pupils show exceptional care to one another, including in the early years. They revel in the warm relationships they have with staff members.

In class and at social times, pupils behave well. Pupils who struggle with managing their behaviour, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported well. In classes, pupils maintain a focus on their work. When pupils are faced with a setback, they take it in their stride and move forward.

Pupils were appalled at the thought that there might be bullying in their school. There is none.

The work pupils do to learn more about the environment and how to care for it is helping them to be responsible citizens. They delighted in growing vegetables, which they harvested and made into soup, sharing it with community members.

However, the much-needed work to improve the academic curriculum has only just begun. Development was, in part, stalled by the significant disruption caused during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the curriculum is not yet fully planned, or staff trained sufficiently to introduce the new approach as leaders would like.

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

Leaders have prioritised building pupils' self-esteem and resilience. This has worked well, particularly for pupils with SEND. Pupils, from the youngest pre-school child to the oldest pupil, are now ready to embrace an academic programme that gives them the breadth and depth of knowledge they need and challenges them fully.

Leaders have been developing a new approach to the curriculum. It is slowly being introduced at The Clinton. However, teaching staff have not gathered sufficient understanding or confidence to roll it out. Older pupils have significant gaps in knowledge, and teachers require further support to teach the mixed-age group classes.

Currently, pupils are not experiencing an ambitious curriculum. Too often, activities are not well matched to pupils' prior learning, their experiences or personal needs. Furthermore, in a wide range of subjects, teachers have not broken complex ideas into the smaller building blocks that pupils need to gather first before they can tackle them.

In some subjects, such as music and French, pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. There is no evidence that they are catching up quickly.

Leaders are aware that assessment systems are either underdeveloped or are not in place. This limits their ability to provide teachers with the support they need. However, it is stronger in early reading, and in English more widely. In classes, including in the early years, the questions that teaching staff ask do not give them insight into pupils' understanding. As a result, they do not adapt their plans to ensure that pupils are properly challenged or adequately supported. In addition, leaders' own monitoring lacks the rigour that is needed. This leads to them, and those responsible for governance, having an over-generous view of the school's performance.

Children in the pre-school and in the Reception Year get off to a good start. Staff have focused on their personal, social and emotional development, as well as introducing them to reading. Children in the Reception Year are progressing well, learning new sounds and tricky words that are not phonetic. The youngest children enjoy chanting rhymes and singing songs.

Throughout the school, teachers promote reading. Pupils love reading and read well. They approach unfamiliar words with confidence, sounding out and blending well.

Teaching staff provide an extensive range of opportunities for pupils to participate in. Eco-committee and ethos-committee members explain their responsibilities and how they are helping other children with enthusiasm. The trust-wide link with a school in Uganda is giving pupils an insight into life in a different part of the world, and pupils explore how changes affect the children there. Pupils have had their community work and care for the planet recognised in awards from the Royal Horticultural Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Christian values of this church school are prevalent. Assemblies and acts of worship help pupils reflect on their own character and how they contribute to the community.

Leaders are aware of the challenges of workload for staff in this small school. Staff appreciate the care that leaders show them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School-based staff and the trust's social inclusion officers know the children and their families well. They are quick to spot any changes, providing help in a timely fashion. The secondment of a public health nurse to the trust team is providing additional benefits. Staff work well with other agencies to make sure that families are supported well, and also provide direct support themselves.

All the necessary checks are completed to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. The welfare requirements of the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' are met in full.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching across many subjects, including music and history, lacks ambition and cohesion. As a result, pupils struggle to recall what they have been taught, and gaps in learning are not closing quickly. Trust leaders should support subject leaders so that they have the knowledge they need to improve the curriculum plans and their implementation in the subjects they oversee.
- Staff have not identified what pupils should know by particular points in their time at the school. Therefore, teachers' assessments of what pupils know are not robust or reliable. Leaders should ensure that there are clear assessment criteria in place that relate to pupils' progress through the curriculums. Teaching staff should use the information from their assessments to plan future teaching to better meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the quality of education. The information those responsible for governance receive lacks rigour. Leaders should ensure that robust monitoring arrangements of the quality of education are put in place to ensure that trustees can make well-informed strategic decisions in this area.

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	145844
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256577
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
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

- The school joined Alumnis Multi-academy Trust in October 2018.
- The headteacher oversees this school and Dolton Church of England Primary School.
- The school is a small school, with two mixed-age classes and a pre-school class for two-, three- and four-year olds.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2019.
- No pupils attend alternative provision settings.

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 held discussions with the headteacher, the chief executive officer and the director of education of the multi-academy trust and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the trust board and four members of the local school committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in computing, early reading, history and mathematics. In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and spoke to leaders about geography, music, French and the early years.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 and 3 read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including staff recruitment checks and referrals to external agencies.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to Parent View, and the lead inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Matthew Shirley

Ofsted Inspector

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