

Inspection of a good school: Exford Church of England First School

Exford, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 7PP

Inspection date:

28 March 2023

Outcome

Exford Church of England First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are kind and understanding of each other. They lend a helping hand or make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak. Pupils know they should be 'safe, respectful and ready'. They know what bullying is but say it does not happen.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils live up to these. As a result, the school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Staff know pupils well. They ensure each pupil receives the care they need. This includes the very youngest children who attend the pre-school.

Pupils love learning the school's 'Generation Exmoor' curriculum. For example, they talk enthusiastically about developing teamwork and about their learning from different subjects. Pupils enjoy school trips, such as those to historical sites. As one pupil expressed, these opportunities help them to 'see the world'.

Pupils value the school's 'pupil parliament.' They feel that leaders listen to them. For instance, pupils help to decide how to raise money for charity. Parents speak highly of the school. They say that their children are prepared well for the next steps in their education.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, they have thought intelligently about the knowledge and skills that pupils need to succeed in life. Pupils in the early years gain a secure knowledge of phonics. This prepares them well for future learning. Governors share leaders' vision and check the impact of leaders' actions.

Pupils start learning to read when they join Reception. They read books that are matched carefully to the sounds they are learning. If pupils struggle to learn any sounds, they receive timely and effective support. As a result, pupils quickly build their reading fluency and confidence. Once they can read well, pupils enjoy reading independently.

Leaders have made recent changes to strengthen the mathematics curriculum. Although this new curriculum is in its infancy, pupils gain mathematical knowledge well. For example, they remember mathematical facts and use mathematical vocabulary to explain their reasoning. Teaching builds well on pupils' understanding of number from their learning in the early years.

In most subjects from the wider curriculum, leaders have identified the precise knowledge and skills that pupils should learn. Teaching in these subjects helps pupils acquire subject-specific language and vocabulary. Where leaders have planned the curriculum in detail, assessment is effective. For example, it accurately identifies gaps in pupils' phonic or mathematical knowledge. Teachers use this insight to remedy gaps in pupils' knowledge and correct their misconceptions. However, this is not the case in some subjects, which means that pupils do not consistently acquire the detailed knowledge they need.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve. Leaders establish exactly what pupils' needs are and ensure that teaching is adapted appropriately. Resources, such as the sensory room, help some pupils with their behaviour needs. Consequently, the needs of pupils with SEND are met well.

Leaders plan educational visits to help pupils follow the curriculum. For example, pupils develop their historical understanding from a trip to a local castle. Visitors from a zoo brought in animals for pupils to meet first-hand. This helped them with their learning in science.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests. For example, pupils enjoyed taking part in an opera and a gymnastics competition. Leaders ensure that there are no barriers to pupils taking part in these opportunities.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves physically healthy. Younger pupils learn routines well. The personal development curriculum helps pupils understand healthy relationships in ways appropriate to their age. Leaders help pupils to learn that people are 'all different, all equal'. They learn about democracy by voting for class representatives.

Leaders provide effective training for staff. This has improved teachers' subject knowledge and enhanced teaching. Staff speak positively about how leaders manage their workload. They value leaders' support for their well-being and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe. They know they can speak to an adult if something is worrying them. The curriculum helps pupils learn how to keep safe online.

Staff are alert to pupils' well-being and pass on concerns to leaders. Leaders take effective action to secure support for children. They work closely with external agencies, such as local safeguarding partners. This helps to protect children. Leaders ensure that suitable checks are made on adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn are not identified precisely enough. Therefore, pupils do not build securely on what they have learned before. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is planned in sufficient depth in all subjects so that pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills 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 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	123756
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10227067
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-Chairs of governing body	Frances Nicholson and Helen Jenkinson
Headteacher	Naomi Philip (Executive headteacher), Nicola Stenner (Head of School)
Website	www.exfordfirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Moorland Federation.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school and is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The school received its last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in July 2015.
- The pre-school admits two-year olds.
- 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 executive headteacher, head of school, members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders and 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 with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jyotsna Paranjape

Ofsted Inspector

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