

Inspection of a good school: Dartington Church of England Academy

Shinners Bridge, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6JU

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Dartington Church of England Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They talk confidently about what they learn. They feel safe and know that staff are there to support them. Pupils value the extensive school grounds, where they play safely. Pupils show respect for their environment.

The school's ethos is aligned with the values of 'compassion, trust, peace, wisdom, creation and creativity'. Pupils describe their school as friendly and a place where everyone is respected.

Leaders have worked with the school community to establish shared expectations of how pupils should behave. As a result, pupils understand their teachers' expectations and behave well.

Pupils have a secure understanding of different types of relationships. Older pupils know what it means to be a role model for younger pupils. Pupils identify peers who set examples of how to behave. Pupils also respect their teachers as role models.

Pupils participate in a wide range of clubs. They enjoy learning and participating in new activities, such as archery and zorbing. As a result, pupils develop resilience and confidence in areas beyond the curriculum.

Parents are supportive of the school and the new leaders. They value leaders and teachers being present before school to greet their children.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum celebrates the richness of the local community and countryside while also teaching pupils that they are part of a wider national and international community. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of local and global issues.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Learning to read begins in the early years. Staff read stories to children that include different cultures and religions. When children in Nursey are ready, they learn their phonic sounds. Pupils use their phonic knowledge to help them decode unfamiliar words. Staff skilfully support pupils when listening to them read. Teachers check pupils' understanding of phonics effectively. When pupils struggle, leaders are quick to provide extra support so they do not fall behind. Books are well matched to pupils' reading abilities. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and read books written by a wide range of authors.

The mathematics curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced. Pupils use concepts they have previously learned and apply them to new ideas. Children begin to learn mathematics in Nursery. They sing traditional songs, such as 'Five current buns in a baker's shop', and use their fingers to count as they sing. From an early stage, children begin to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in mathematics.

Leaders have designed a wider curriculum to provide pupils with a range of opportunities to explore diverse skills and develop wider knowledge. For example, pupils enjoy building pulley cars, learning different ways of preparing food and splitting logs safely. Leaders make effective use of the on-site forest school, where pupils enjoy learning to cook food over an open fire.

Leaders have set out the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. However, some subject leadership is at an early stage. As a result, checks on how successfully pupils learn have not been as regular as leaders intend. This has meant that aspects of the curriculum are not implemented effectively. In some subjects, assessment is not precise enough. This means that some pupils have work that is not matched to what they know and can do. As a result, pupils do not learn as successfully as they could.

This is an inclusive school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are involved in all aspects of school life. Staff are knowledgeable about pupils with SEND. When necessary, teachers make appropriate adaptations to the learning of pupils with SEND. This means that pupils are supported to overcome potential barriers and are engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils with SEND follow the full curriculum.

Leaders create many opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils learn musical instruments and experience a live orchestra. They also learn about different careers from visiting speakers such as scientists. Pupils routinely learn about democracy and vote for membership of the school council. Pupils are passionate about equality. They are tolerant and respectful of difference.

Staff morale in the school is high. They feel well supported by leaders. Staff know that leaders consider their well-being and workload.

Governors and trustees know the school's strengths and areas of development. They support and challenge leaders. Leaders and governors have a shared vision for the future development of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are vigilant in identifying behaviour that may be a safeguarding concern. As a result, records are detailed and robust.

Leaders make timely safeguarding referrals. They are tenacious and ensure that pupils receive appropriate support from external agencies to keep pupils safe.

Leaders ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks are made so that adults are safe to work with pupils.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online. They know that they must not share personal details with people they do not know.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the approach to assessment. In some subjects, systems for checking what pupils know and remember are not precise enough. This leads to some pupils learning content that is not well matched to what they know and can do. Leaders need to ensure that systems for checking what pupils know and understand provide teachers and subject leaders with the information they need to develop a successful curriculum for all pupils.
- Subject leadership needs to be strengthened further. Checks made by some subject leaders are not precise enough to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the necessary expertise to evaluate the impact of their curriculums.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged Dartington Church of England Primary School to be good in May 2016.

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	148490
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10298103
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Vaughton
Headteacher	Charlotte Huish
Website	www.dartington-lap.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Learning Academy Partnership multi-academy trust.
- This is a Church of England School. The last section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in January 2017. The outcome was outstanding.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school has a nursery for three- and four-year-old children.
- There is an on-site breakfast club and after-school club run by the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met the designated safeguarding lead, checked the single central record of adults working in the school and looked at safeguarding records.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and the special education needs coordinator.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and by talking to parents after school. The inspector also evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Gentile, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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