

Inspection of Cerne Abbas C of E VC First School

Duck Street, Cerne Abbas, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7LA

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Cerne Abbas First school are happy and safe. They enjoy coming to school and most have high attendance. Parents speak of the 'warm, friendly and approachable' staff and atmosphere.

Staff have high expectations, which pupils strive to meet. Pupils know how the school values apply to their own lives and actions. They know how they should treat others and how they should behave. This knowledge helps them to develop their character and make positive choices about their behaviour.

Leaders have ensured that there are strong links to the local community. For example, pupils learned much from interviewing former pupils of the school to find out about how the community has changed over time.

Experiences such as the many trips and community events that pupils take part in mean that they thrive and flourish at the school. Pupils understand what it means to be an active citizen, as well as the value of being one. They are proud of the support that they provide to children in other countries through their fundraising.

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

All pupils learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. Knowledge is taught in a logical order. Staff make sure that pupils remember previous learning before they move on to new material. Consequently, pupils build on what they already know and can do. However, pupils' written work is not always of high quality. It does not show well what pupils know and can do. Leaders know this and have begun to focus on improving pupils' writing.

Staff have the subject knowledge that they need. They explain new learning clearly and link this to what pupils already know. Assessment is well used to identify gaps in pupils' subject knowledge. Pupils get the support they need to fill these gaps. Staff adapt learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This enables them to learn alongside their peers. Most activities provided for pupils are well aligned to the knowledge and skills that staff want them to build. However, sometimes the activities that pupils complete do not deepen their understanding sufficiently.

Leaders provide regular training for staff on the phonics programme the school uses. Consequently, staff have the expertise they need to teach children to read well. Staff model sounds with accuracy. They identify pupils who struggle to read and give them the support they need to keep up. Pupils read books that match their reading ability. They become confident and fluent readers. Staff read to pupils with great enthusiasm. This builds a love of reading. Most pupils read widely and often. Leaders ensure that parents know how to support their children with reading.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start. Staff know the children well and respond to their individual interests and needs. Building language and communication is at the heart of the curriculum. Children enjoy the many stories, songs and poems that staff share with them. Staff spot signs that a child might need extra help, including those with SEND.

Pupils behave well. They can learn without disruption. The atmosphere is calm and orderly. Pupils of all ages play together harmoniously at social times. The early years spaces are a hive of activity. Children share the space and toys with each other.

Leaders have ensured that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils hear and read books that feature different genres, cultures and backgrounds. For instance, pupils' study a female pirate and an African American polar explorer. This helps them to understand the contributions made to society by people from a variety of backgrounds.

Pupils' talents and interests are developed through the curriculum and clubs offered by the school. Leaders strive to provide the opportunities that pupils request. For example, cookery club was set up in response to pupils' views.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work. They know what is going well in the school and where improvement is required. Governors hold leaders to account, while also providing support.

Staff morale is high. Leaders are considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff feel well supported and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to spot the signs that a pupil may not be safe. High levels of vigilance from all staff mean that potential issues are spotted early. Concerns raised are acted on promptly.

Leaders make appropriate and timely referrals to other agencies. They are tenacious in securing the help that pupils and families need.

Appropriate checks are made on staff to make sure they are suitable to work at the school.

The curriculum helps pupils to know when they may be at risk and how to get help if they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the learning activities that pupils complete lack precision. This means that they do not always deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. Leaders need to ensure that activities reflect the curriculum's intention so that all pupils learn and achieve well.
- The work that pupils produce, particularly in writing, is not always of high quality. Consequently, they do not demonstrate all that they know and can do. Leaders need to ensure that pupils' work reflects the ambitious curriculum that they learn.

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	113759
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10267915
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Barbara Southcott
Headteacher	Catherine Cresswell
Website	www.cerneabbas.dorset.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 February 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in February 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due by February 2024.
- 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 headteacher, governors, a representative of the diocese and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and religious education.

- For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in history and art as well as in the deep dive subjects.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they dropped their children off at school and during sports day.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspectors
Kathy Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector

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