

Inspection of South Molton United Church of England Primary School

Exeter Road, South Molton, Devon EX36 4EN

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils and parents agree that the school is inclusive and caring. Parents appreciate the support the school provides for their children. Pupils respectfully celebrate the values of the school, 'uniquely different, united together and universally prepared', during daily collective worship.

Pupils are not supported well enough to remember the most important knowledge. As a result, too many pupils have gaps in their learning. The school recognises that improvements to the curriculum have not had the intended impact.

To develop confidence, pupils take on roles of responsibility, such as prefects. The pupil ethos group works well with the school's leaders. Together they identify ways to improve the school, such as purchasing new equipment for the pond and mud kitchen.

Pupils learn to keep safe online. They say that at times bullying happens but staff are quick to take appropriate action. Pupils enjoy playing together with the range of equipment in the playground.

Many pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities that develop their interests and talents, such as football club and gardening club.

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

The school has recently made changes to the curriculum. However, the school has not been effective enough in assessing the impact of these changes. The curriculum does not yet have the impact the school intends. As a result, too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

The school has recently introduced a new phonics curriculum. The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is effective. These pupils have a strong understanding of phonics and enjoy reading. However, too many pupils in key stage 2 have not secured the phonic knowledge that they need in order to read with accuracy and fluency.

Most pupils enjoy learning mathematics. The mathematics curriculum is well planned and sequenced. However, teaching does not consistently assess pupils' understanding. This means the curriculum is not checked to ensure the work pupils do is well matched to what they know and can do. As a result, too many pupils do not have a secure understanding of key concepts. This leads to some pupils disengaging from learning, with low-level disruption occurring in some classrooms.

The curriculum meets the expectations of the national curriculum. However, the school has not been explicit enough in identifying the key content it wants pupils to

learn and remember. Teaching does not revisit key concepts regularly enough. This means, in some subjects, pupils have superficial knowledge.

The school prides itself on its inclusive culture. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have positive relationships with staff. However, the school has not identified precise and achievable targets for these pupils. As a result, gaps in their learning are not addressed quickly enough.

Staff in the early years skilfully adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. Learning activities develop children's knowledge and interests. The curriculum is designed well to develop children's communication and language. Children enjoy listening to stories and join in with traditional nursery rhymes. Teaching regularly checks children's understanding of number and phonics. As a result, children in the early years are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils benefit from visiting different places of worship. However, this learning is not linked effectively to the curriculum. As a result, pupils are not able to recall important knowledge about different faiths and cultures. Furthermore, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and protected characteristics is not fully developed. They are not well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Most pupils behave well. They understand the importance of treating everyone fairly and with respect. However, not all staff have high enough expectations of how pupils should behave. At times, inappropriate behaviour inside and outside of classrooms is not addressed. As a result, instances of low-level behaviour occur too frequently and impact on the learning of other pupils.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload and treat well-being as a priority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have accurate information about the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. This means the school does not know the effect of changes to the curriculum on pupils' learning or what further improvements are required. The school should ensure that improvement work is checked for its impact on pupils' learning.
- Too many pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their phonic knowledge. As a result, these pupils are not confident and fluent readers. The school needs to ensure that staff have the depth of subject knowledge they need to deliver the phonics curriculum successfully so that pupils catch up rapidly.

- In some subjects, assessment is not effective. Assessment information is not used well to inform or adapt the curriculum. This means pupils do not build on prior learning. The school needs to ensure assessment information is used to adapt the curriculum effectively so that pupils know and remember the curriculum's essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary.
- The curriculum for personal development does not provide pupils with sufficient knowledge of fundamental British values, different faiths and cultures and protected characteristics. The school should review the current curriculum to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to learn about other faiths, equality and citizenship.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	113454
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10297907
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elisabeth Grandey
Headteacher	Kevin O'Donnell
Website	www.smups.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is an on-site breakfast club and after-school club run by the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 inspectors listened to pupils in Year 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and by talking to parents before and after school. The inspector also evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

James Gentile, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Fletcher

His Majesty's Inspector

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