

Inspection of Verwood Church of England First School

Howe Lane, Verwood, Dorset BH31 6JF

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Katharine Anstey. This school is part of Initio Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Liz West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Kingston.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Verwood Church of England First School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, 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 graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils learn well at this school. The ambition for every pupil to succeed has been the trust's vision through a period of significant change.

The school has recently made the expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their learning clearer. As a result, pupils know the rules, rewards and consequences. In most cases, pupils behave well and meet these high expectations. Children in the early years already know the daily routines. They follow instructions and listen well. Sometimes, pupils do not produce the work they are capable of. The new expectations are beginning to address this across the curriculum.

Pupils feel safe. Relationships are strong between adults and pupils. This means that pupils trust adults if they have a problem. Pupils like the 'kindness monsters' which are available in each base. They use them to share any worries, and know that adults will help them to resolve them.

Pupils learn how to be good citizens through experiences such as recycling and tree planting. The eco-committee members were particularly proud of their Green Flag award. Pupils understand that people are different. They say that everyone is unique and treated equally. Pupils live out this belief in this inclusive school.

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

A love of reading is visible across the school. In Nursery, children enjoy joining in with rhymes and familiar stories. This enthusiasm continues as they move through the school. Texts become longer and more complex as pupils get older. Pupils enjoy listening to adults read but also develop the skills to read these books themselves.

In the Nursery, children begin to hear and identify sounds. This sets them up well for Reception, where they start learning phonics straight away. They quickly learn the knowledge to be able to blend these sounds together to read simple words. The school has recently moved to a different phonics programme. This has been well managed. Staff have the expertise to deliver phonics effectively. This means that most pupils keep up. Those who struggle receive the support they need to catch up.

The curriculum is ambitious. The school has considered the local context when deciding on the content. For example, in history, pupils learn about local significant figures. In art and design, they learn about artists from other cultures. Trips and visitors enrich learning. Consequently, pupils build a strong cultural capital that expands their understanding of the world they live in.

The school has identified the specific knowledge and vocabulary it wants pupils to learn. In the early years, this knowledge has been broken down into small steps so that staff are clear about what the two- and three-year-olds should know and how the three- and four-year-olds build on this. This sequencing continues through each year group. This means pupils, including those with special educational needs

and/or disabilities (SEND), build on what they already know. For example, children in the early years learn how they can make a ball travel. They build on this in further years so that, in physical education (PE) in key stage 2, pupils can use this knowledge when playing carefully selected ball games. Learning is adapted for pupils with SEND so that they can take part and be successful.

Children in the early years transition into the Nursery and Reception carefully. They settle quickly because adults help them to feel comfortable. They learn confidently inside and outside. Activities are motivating so that children are keen to have a go. There are opportunities to practise new knowledge and skills, which builds their understanding across the areas of learning.

In a few subjects, the way the curriculum is sometimes implemented does not help pupils to grasp and recall key knowledge. This is particularly the case in some areas of mathematics, where pupils struggled to accurately recall units of measure. The school does not have an accurate enough evaluation of how well pupils learn across the curriculum. Support from the trust is helping the school to evaluate pupils' learning more precisely.

Morale is high in the school. Staff, including early career teachers, feel well supported. Staff are positive about the opportunities they have to work with colleagues from other schools. They find this supports their workload as well as their professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not always implemented as the school expects. Pupils learn less well when this is the case. The school needs to develop teaching so that pupils learn well across the curriculum.
- The school does not always have an accurate evaluation of the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning, including those with SEND. Therefore, it does not have the information to drive improvements. The school needs to ensure it has a precise understanding of strengths and weaknesses so that pupils know more and remember more across the curriculum.

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	146720
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10256638
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kingston
CEO of trust	Liz West
Headteacher	Katharine Anstey (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.verwoodfirst.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England first school in the Diocese of Salisbury. Its last section 48 inspection was in May 2019.
- The school has provision for two-, three- and four-year-olds in its nursery.
- Recently, a number of key staff have changed at the school, including the headteacher, after a long period of stability.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 judgment 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PE and history. 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 held meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teaching and support staff, the chair of the trust board, a trustee, members of the local school committee, the chief executive officer and the director of education.
- 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 lead inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils informally and formally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation form.

Inspection team

Angela Folland, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Torrance	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Fletcher	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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