

Inspection of a good school: West Moors, St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Station Road, West Moors, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 0JF

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Roy Sewell. This school is part of The Heath Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Justine Horn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nick Musselwhite.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. They know that adults care for them and provide strong pastoral support. They say that everyone is kind and gets along well. Playtimes are fun. Pupils value taking part in whole-school debates through what the school calls 'big questions'. This broadens pupils' horizons and helps them consider wider world issues such as famine and apply their knowledge of the school's values such as 'hope'.

There is a strong sense of service at this school. Year 4 pupils act as play leaders and support younger pupils in the dining hall. Pupils visit local care homes to deliver music and choir performances. Pupils understand the importance of keeping the food 'sharing shed' stocked up. There is a range of visitors who extend pupils' experiences. For example, the local fire brigade visits Reception.

Pupils learn a range of subjects. However, the curriculum does not provide pupils with the essential knowledge they need at the right time. The trust's expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently being realised at this time. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge across the curriculum. At times, some pupils can behave carelessly in lessons or struggle to persevere. This slows all pupils' learning down.

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

The school's approach to developing pupils' character and self-identity enables pupils to understand how everyone is unique. Pupils gain a strong sense of right and wrong. The curriculum prioritises keeping pupils physically fit and mentally healthy right from the start. It teaches pupils about managing their feelings well. Almost every parent would recommend the school to another parent. Staff morale is high. There is a sharp focus on supporting the most vulnerable families. Typically, staff support pupils with the most complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively.

In many subjects, the curriculum identifies what pupils should know and by when they should know it. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum in some subjects. In the recent past, pupils did not learn everything they should have across the curriculum. Some sequences of work do not demand enough of pupils over time. The trust and school are working in unison to put this right, but it is early days. As a result, teaching across the curriculum does not always build successfully on what pupils need to know next, including in the early years.

Teaching is not based on strong subject knowledge in some parts of the curriculum. This can mean that pupils do not learn essential subject content well over time. This creates difficulties for pupils later on. For example, the curriculum does not ensure that all pupils have quick recall of multiplication tables or a firm foundation of fractions for their age. This makes solving number problems trickier than it should. As a result, gaps in pupils' number knowledge persist.

Children in the early years learn routines quickly. They enjoy the curriculum on offer and many, particularly in Reception, sustain their concentration well. However, the trust does not have enough oversight of the quality of education children receive. Teaching does not model early language and communication sufficiently well in order to help children learn.

The school's work to refine the teaching of phonics is well underway and making a positive difference. This is helping many pupils to read accurately and gain a solid understanding of what they read. However, teaching is less effective for a minority of pupils in key stage 1 because staff do not identify misconceptions as soon as they arise. When this happens, it can result in pupils practising sounds and writing letters and words inaccurately.

There is a growing focus on analysing the reasons for pupils' persistent absence. Most pupils are now attending regularly as a result. The trust has ensured that there is a clear behaviour policy in place. Most pupils behave well. However, at times, pupils can forget themselves and run down the corridor or forget to follow the school rules. Staff do not always pick this up promptly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are weaknesses in the implementation of the mathematics curriculum. The curriculum does not enable pupils to know and remember important knowledge such as number facts early enough. This impedes how well pupils can apply their mathematical knowledge as they progress through the curriculum. The trust must ensure that staff implement the full mathematics curriculum as they intend, and that pupils learn it consistently well.
- Teaching does not always build on what pupils know already. Some teaching sequences do not deepen pupils' knowledge well enough. When misconceptions occur, some staff do not pick this up sufficiently well. This slows pupils' learning down. The trust must ensure that staff are adept at using their assessments to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs consistently well.
- Some teaching is not based on strong subject knowledge. Teaching does not identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember next. Gaps in pupils' learning persist. The trust must ensure that teaching is based on strong subject knowledge so that pupils learn the full curriculum and are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- The school does not prioritise children's early language development sufficiently well in Nursery. Some children do not learn as well as they could. The trust must ensure that it has stringent oversight of the early years so as to make sure that children have consistently effective teaching.

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 predecessor school, West Moors, St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, to be good in March 2011.

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	142514
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10298048
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	164
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Musselwhite
CEO of trust	Justine Horn
Headteacher	Roy Sewell
Website	www.stmaryswestmoors.org
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Heath Academy Trust. This is a trust of six primary schools in East Dorset.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Salisbury. The previous section 48 inspection took place in April 2016.
- The school's Nursery takes children from two years of age.
- Pupils transfer to a range of middle schools at the age of nine.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a before- and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, other school staff, the chair of trustees, the chief executive officer, the director of education and trust mathematics lead. The inspector did not meet with a representative of the local school committee (LSC) because the school was unable to arrange this. The scheme of delegation sets out that the LSC holds some, but not all, governance responsibilities.
- The inspector 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 inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. They spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and responses to the staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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