

Inspection of Berkley Church of England First School

Berkley Street, Berkley, Frome, Somerset BA11 5JH

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 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 graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. 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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of the 'Berkley family' and all that it brings in developing them personally. Many pupils become confident and self-assured. They enjoy learning outside and serving the local community, for example through leading farmers' markets at harvest time and performing in the local church. Pupil leaders from Year 4 buddy up with younger pupils and take on board their leadership roles admirably. Charity work broadens pupils' understanding of the wider world through, for example, sponsoring the toilet facilities in a village school in Nigeria.

Pupils get off to a great start in Reception. They learn routines quickly and are well prepared for Year 1. Elsewhere, the quality of education pupils receive is improving. Pupils say learning is fun and interesting. However, the curriculum in some subjects does not teach pupils all the knowledge they need to know next. This means that some pupils do not learn the depth of knowledge they should across the curriculum.

Pupils gain a strong sense of right and wrong. Extra-curricular activities, clubs, visits and visitors broaden pupils' experiences well. Pupils relish receiving a positive behaviour lanyard, for example a green lanyard for 'great listening' in class. However, pupils are not always supported to adhere to the high expectations set out in the school's behaviour policy at social times. At times, there can be some unkindness between pupils.

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

Leaders, including governors, act with integrity and rigour. They have a strong vision for what they want to achieve. They have already addressed a myriad of complicated challenges, including organisational change. Staff morale is now typically high.

The school's action plans focus on the right aspects for improvement. The school is addressing many of the remaining weaknesses head-on. This is incrementally improving the quality of education pupils receive. For example, the school has used external support well to improve the mathematics curriculum. Staff follow the agreed mathematics approaches and provide pupils with suitable resources to help them learn. The curriculum is securely mapped out in Reception and plans are afoot to extend this across the school. The right work has begun to ensure that pupils learn how to reason in mathematics and secure their number facts and multiplication tables.

The teaching of phonics is effective. It follows a consistent approach across the school. Additional teaching for pupils who need to catch up in key stages 1 and 2 is helping them to recognise and say sounds in words with increasing accuracy. However, a minority of these pupils do not have enough practice to become fluent when reading whole sentences. Curriculum work is underway to strengthen pupils' understanding of what they read. Improvements are starting to emerge, but this work is relatively new.

Recent changes to staff's curriculum roles and responsibilities are ensuring that the subject curriculums are being designed from a position of strong subject knowledge. Most subject curriculums identify what pupils should know and by when, for example in science. The curriculum in the early years meets children's needs well.

However, there are some weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. Teaching, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is not consistently effective. When pupils get stuck, it can take too long to adapt teaching or provide pupils with sufficient practice to secure new knowledge. Some subject content across sequences of work does not demand enough of pupils. When this happens, there are occasions when pupils lose concentration. This slows their learning down.

The English curriculum does not include everything pupils need to know to write with the complexity and quality expected for their age. Pupils do not edit and improve their work, or use paragraphs when they are ready to. Some pupils do not apply their phonics knowledge to spell accurately when completing writing tasks.

The school is strengthening its approach to identifying pupils with SEND. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work. The curriculum these pupils receive is not addressing their gaps in knowledge sufficiently.

Pupils attend regularly. They behave very well in the lunch hall because supervision is effective. However, some pupils do not behave as well at other social times. Staff are not adept at noticing when pupils' behaviour on the playground falls short of the school's behaviour policy. Systems to record and follow up incidents are not robust.

The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum includes everything it should. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and keeping physically and mentally fit. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe online.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to refer any concerns about pupils' well-being or those who may be at risk of harm. The school takes action to keep pupils safe. However, some minor improvements need to be made to strengthen record-keeping and training requirements. These do not have an immediate impact on the safety of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The English curriculum does not teach pupils everything they need to know at the right time. Some pupils do not apply their phonics knowledge to spell accurately. Sequences of work do not teach pupils some essential knowledge early enough,

for example editing and improving their writing and writing in paragraphs. The school must ensure that the English curriculum is sufficiently ambitious so that all pupils learn English consistently well.

- Teaching, including for pupils with SEND, does not build effectively on what pupils know consistently well. Some teaching is not adapted well enough to deal with pupils' misconceptions or provide them with sufficient practice to secure new knowledge. These things slow pupils' learning down. The school must ensure that teaching is based on strong knowledge of what pupils already know and what they need to know next, so that pupils learn well across the curriculum and are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- The school does not have sufficient oversight of how well the behaviour policy is being implemented. Record-keeping is not detailed or used effectively. Some pupils' conduct at social times falls short of the school's expectations. The school must ensure that its behaviour systems and records are fully effective so that pupils' conduct is consistently strong.
- Some minor improvements in safeguarding are required to improve record-keeping and training requirements. This does not put pupils at risk of harm. The school needs to ensure its safeguarding arrangements are in line with the requirements set out in current legislation.

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	123743
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10267914
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Liz Halliwell
Headteacher	Suzanne Thompson
Website	www.berkleyschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 February 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There are four classes at this school: Reception for four- and five-year olds; Year 1; and two mixed-aged classes, one for pupils in Years 2 and 3 and one for pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- The headteacher was appointed in 2019 when this role was part time, two days per week. There has been major reorganisation of staffing at the school. In January 2022, the headteacher increased her working days from two days to four days a week. A senior teacher acts in the role of headteacher one day per week.
- There have been several staff changes at the school in recent years. A new special educational needs co-ordinator took up her part-time role in September 2023.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The previous section 48 inspection took place in October 2023.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior teacher and other school staff. An inspector met with representatives of the governing body and held telephone discussions with representatives from Somerset local authority, the Diocese of Bath and Wells and the school's external school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, the 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. An inspector also met with staff and pupils to discuss other curriculum subjects including science and art. The inspector also discussed the implementation of modern foreign languages in key stage 2.
- An inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. They spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to discuss how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors 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

Tom Brewer

Ofsted Inspector

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