

Inspection of South Molton Community Primary School

North Road, South Molton, Devon EX36 3BA

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic about the school and the opportunities for them to learn about the environment. The school has a strong focus on outdoor learning. It uses its extensive grounds creatively to enhance pupils' learning beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning about animal habitats and caring for chickens. Pupils learn about sustainability through the school's focus on composting, recycling and non-electricity days. This helps to prepare them for becoming responsible citizens.

The calm and positive learning environment reflects the high expectations for behaviour at the school. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They are considerate of others and show respect and understanding. This starts in the early years, where children learn to take turns and play collaboratively. Older pupils appreciate the opportunity of being 'Young Leaders'. They enjoy helping the youngest children at playtimes. This gives them a sense of responsibility.

Pupils learn how to keep safe, both in school, in the community and online. This includes, road safety, water safety and bike-ability. Bullying is rare in the school. Pupils know that if they have any concerns, there are adults in school to whom they can talk. As a result, pupils feel safe.

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

The school has carefully constructed the curriculum. It sets out and breaks down the knowledge that leaders expect pupils to learn and remember. This means pupils follow a coherent sequence of learning across the curriculum. The curriculum builds from strong foundations in the early years. In Reception Year, there is a strong focus on helping children to build their vocabulary. Staff provide positive role models. They support children well with learning to articulate their thoughts and needs.

However, assessment in the wider curriculum is in its early stages of development. Teachers do not yet check what pupils already know and can do in all subjects. This means some pupils have gaps in their knowledges. When this occurs, some pupils do not develop a secure understanding and struggle to recall what they have previously learned.

Reading is a priority for the school. Leaders describe it as 'the key to the curriculum'. Staff follow a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. This helps most pupils to develop a secure understanding of the phonics code. Most pupils read books that closely match the sounds they know and have learned. This helps them to develop confidence and fluency in their reading. If pupils fall behind, they receive the extra help they need to catch up. Pupils enjoy listening to the carefully chosen stories that adults read to them. They talk with interest about the books that teachers share with them in class. Some pupils find it tricky to apply what they have learned in phonics to their independent writing. As a result, some pupils need further support to ensure they spell words correctly.

The school has clear ambition to meet the needs of all pupils. The environment and ethos are used effectively to support and nurture the individual needs of pupils. There are clear plans for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, this information is not always used effectively to ensure pupils have the right support. This means some pupils with SEND do not learn the curriculum successfully.

The school's behaviour policy focuses on building positive relationships. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff. They learn without disruption. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well.

Older pupils say one of the most important things about the school is the focus on equality and treating everyone the same. The school values help pupils to learn about treating others kindly. Pupils have a secure understanding of the fundamental British values and protected characteristics. They value others' opinions and beliefs.

Most parents are positive about the school. They value the kind, friendly and supportive staff. The school works well with parents and external agencies to help pupils to attend school regularly. They seek to identify and remove any barriers to attendance. Nonetheless, the school needs to continue to work with parents to further improve attendance.

Those responsible for governance have a clear understanding of the school. The school ensures that staff receive the professional development that they need, and this includes teachers at the early stages of their careers. Teachers value the training they receive. They also value the care and support that leaders show them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not fully embedded across the wider curriculum. It does not check that pupils have remembered the knowledge they have been taught or inform next steps in learning. Some pupils do not build secure knowledge and understanding over time and have gaps in their learning. The school must ensure systems for assessment are fully embedded across the curriculum to check what pupils know, understand and can do, to inform future learning so that pupils know more and remember more.
- The needs of some pupils, including some pupils with SEND, are not met well. The school does not yet identify whether the curriculum is being implemented as intended. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school must ensure that the implementation of the curriculum across the school matches

the intent, so that all pupils' needs are met and they are ready for the next stage in learning.

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 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	113168
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10297898
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Brown
Headteacher	Tom Parkin
Website	www.southmoltonprimary.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- 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 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other members of the school's senior leadership team. They held meetings with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited

a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in history and mathematics.

- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted's Parent View online survey. They also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered the responses to surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.

Inspection team

Nicky McMahon, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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