

Inspection of Frome Valley CofE VA First School

School Drive, Crossways, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8WR

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school of this school is Clare Moore. This school is part of Wessex Multi 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, Michael Foley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Baker.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. Adults care for them well. This helps pupils to be happy and secure. Nevertheless, the quality of education they receive requires improvement. Pupils sometimes complete work that does not help them to learn well. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive the right adaptations they need for learning. New leaders are ambitious for the school. However, while pupils learn some parts of the curriculum securely, they can learn more than they do currently.

Pupils behave well in the classroom and at social times. They have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils try their best in lessons, even when the curriculum is not well matched to their needs. They know that adults will help them address any worries they may have. In the early years, children listen well to adults' instructions. They sustain concentration on tasks independently.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs, such as scootering, gardening and dance. This allows them to experience new interests. Pupils develop their leadership skills through different roles in the school. For example, the eco-group helps to promote healthy eating. Pupils learn to be out of their comfort zone through a residential trip.

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

The school, including the trust and local governing committee, is realistic that the quality of education needs to improve. The trust has provided additional support from both within and outside the trust. It has accurately identified the key issues that need to be addressed. It has started to address these. For example, following weak results in the multiplication tables check, pupils now learn their times tables in a more systematic way.

Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Typically, pupils build upon their knowledge in a logical order in key stages 1 and 2. The school continues to make refinements where it identifies the curriculum is not as logically ordered, such as writing. The school has clear systems for recapping on pupils' knowledge. This helps teachers to check how well pupils have learned the curriculum over the long term. In some subjects, pupils recall their learning well.

However, the teaching of the curriculum is variable. This is because some staff lack the expertise they need in certain subjects to teach the range of required knowledge effectively. On some occasions, they give pupils work that does not deepen their learning or match the intended aims of the curriculum. When this happens, pupils do not develop new knowledge well. Furthermore, while pupils with SEND have their needs identified early, staff do not provide effective support to help some of them in lessons. They do not adapt learning well enough. Consequently, these pupils are given work that is too difficult for them, and their progression through the curriculum slows.

The school places a high priority on pupils' learning to read. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading. They enjoy 'story time'. This exposes pupils to a range of different authors and genres. Since the last inspection, staff have been retrained in the teaching of phonics.

This is helping staff to implement it more in line with leaders' expectations. In lessons, teachers support most pupils to learn well. Pupils receive additional support if they fall behind. However, a small number of pupils have their gaps inaccurately checked. They are incorrectly judged as being able to read some phonemes independently. As a result, they come across words in their reading books that they cannot decode. Unlike their classmates, these weaknesses prevent this small group from becoming fluent and confident readers.

The curriculum in the early years requires more careful consideration. The pre-school and Reception curriculums, while coherently sequenced individually, are too separate. There has not been enough oversight to ensure that they link together effectively. As a result, children sometimes do not build on their prior learning well.

The school has a calm and orderly feel. Low-level disruption is rare. However, if it occurs, staff deal with it immediately. Pupils are polite and courteous when speaking to visitors. The school works closely with families to ensure that pupils attend well.

The school ensures it has strong links with its community. For example, children in the early years sing Christmas carols for residents in a care home. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures through assemblies. They understand aspects of discrimination, such as racism. Pupils have an age-appropriate knowledge of how their bodies change as they get older. The school's well-being days help pupils to discuss their feelings.

Parents' and carers' views of the school have improved recently. They rightly praise the school's nurturing ethos.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not have the expertise needed to implement the curriculum effectively. They do not consistently plan work that deepens pupils' knowledge or matches the intended curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not develop new knowledge as securely as they should. The trust must ensure that staff have the skills to teach effectively so that pupils can progress well through the intended curriculum.
- Staff do not provide some pupils with SEND with the necessary adaptations to help them learn well. They sometimes give these pupils tasks that are too hard. When this happens, they do not learn well. The trust must ensure that staff have the skills to provide all pupils with SEND with the necessary support or adaptations to help them achieve well.
- The school has not considered how learning develops well enough from the pre-school until the end of the Reception Year. As a result, children do not build on their prior

learning securely across some of the curriculum. The trust needs to ensure that the curriculum is carefully considered from the provision for two year olds to the end of the Reception Year so that children's knowledge and skills build sequentially in the early years.

- The school has not accurately identified the gaps in phonics knowledge for a small number of pupils who have fallen behind in reading. As a result, these pupils have words in their reading books that they cannot decode independently. The trust needs to support staff to accurately assess pupils' phonics gaps so that they become fluent and confident readers.

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	141777
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10344689
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	155
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Baker
CEO of the trust	Michael Foley
Headteacher	Clare Moore
Website	www.fromevalley.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Wessex Multi Academy Trust.
- The head of school took up her post shortly before the inspection.
- The school has a pre-school provision. This admits children from two years old.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school provision.
- This is an Anglican school in the Diocese of Salisbury. The most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in November 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years of this date.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with trust executive leaders, the head of school, groups of staff, groups of pupils, a trustee and the chair of the local governing committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and history. 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 pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of work in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Williamson

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025