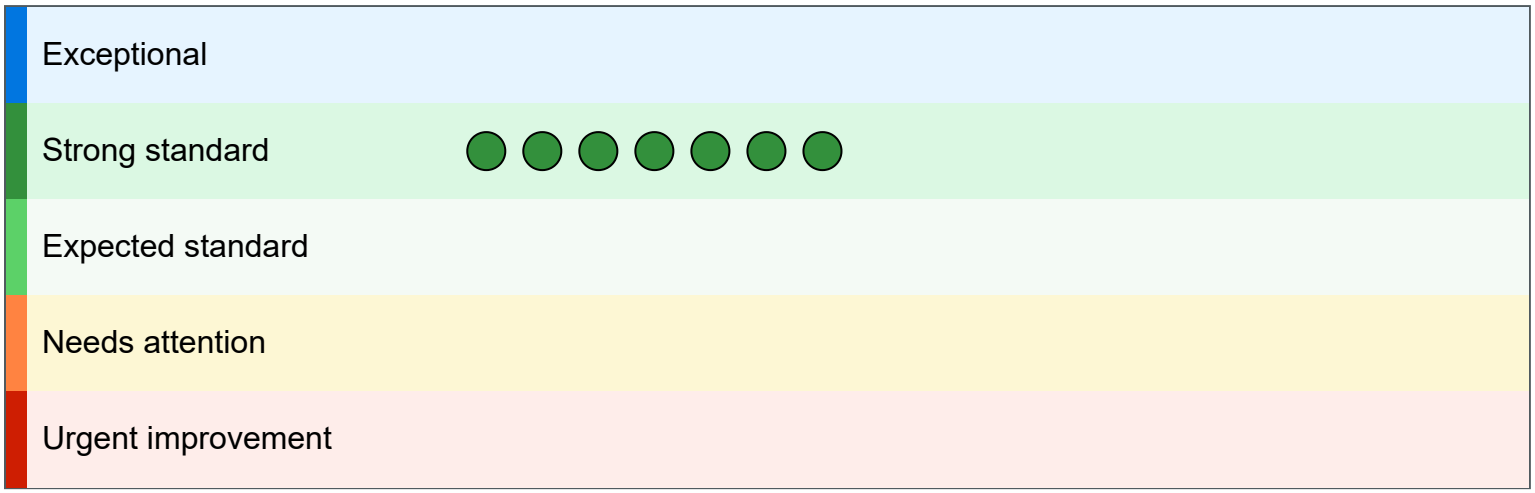
Durweston Church of England Primary School

Address: Durweston, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 0QA

Unique reference number (URN): 149456

Inspection report: 10 February 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard

Published results in the reading and mathematics national tests are well above the national average. In 2025, all pupils met the expected standard in the reading, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar tests. Typically, many Year 6 pupils leave the school having achieved the higher standard in mathematics. Outcomes in the Year 4 multiplication check and the Year 1 phonics screening check are positive. Published outcomes for writing do not reflect the high-quality written work of current pupils.

Pupils use their prior historical knowledge and understanding of chronology and of historical sources to compose detailed written arguments and justify ‘why the Bronze Age was more impressive than the Iron Age’. In art, pupils use their detailed knowledge of perspective to produce high-quality drawings. Very occasionally, a few pupils struggle to apply their knowledge to new tasks when working independently.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders’ approaches to help pupils to attend well are successful. Leaders have created a very friendly and calm school. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend well and arrive ready to learn. Leaders greet parents, carers and pupils warmly at the gate every morning. Leaders and staff build trust, understanding and familiarity that create positive relationships with parents. Leaders help pupils to overcome barriers to regular attendance and reduce anxiety towards attending school. They are successful at promoting strong attendance through newsletters, assemblies and rewards. For pupils with the lowest attendance, staff build small, achievable steps to help them return to school with confidence. Consequently, pupils’ attendance continues to rise markedly, and their persistent absence reduces notably, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

The school’s values guide all aspects of its caring, calm and supportive environment, which makes it a central part of the local community. Pupils act out the school's values through their daily actions. The well-established culture creates a tangible sense of belonging. Pupils’ behaviour is consistently positive. Incidents of bullying are very rare and, when they occur, staff deal with them quickly. Discrimination is not tolerated. Exclusions are very rare. Mature and positive attitudes characterise pupils’ learning, and they show a clear sense of responsibility. They form lasting friendships and enjoy contributing to their school community.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

The curriculum across all subjects is rich and ambitious. Pupils learn the important essential reading, writing and mathematical knowledge that helps them move on with confidence. Staff thoughtfully design activities that strengthen disadvantaged pupils’ understanding of spelling, grammar, structure and purpose of different types of writing. Books in the revised ‘reading spine’ spark pupils’ interests and broaden their horizons. Phonics teaching is clear and accurate. In mathematics, the curriculum and teaching ensure that pupils, including

those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), build up the important knowledge they need.

Staff ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can access the curriculum. For example, staff use personalised learning plans or pastoral support plans to inform their teaching. Leaders made effective use of external specialists to guide staff to design effective programmes and deliver a fully inclusive curriculum.

Teachers' subject knowledge in areas other than reading, writing and mathematics is equally assured. The knowledge and skills pupils learn are organised in a way that helps them build on and connect what they already know in increasingly sophisticated ways. For example, pupils in Year 2 use Venn diagrams to sort everyday materials and plan tests to predict and check how materials change. By Year 4, pupils understand factors they must observe, including those that must remain constant during scientific testing of irreversible changes.

Early years

Strong standard

The detailed early years curriculum sets out the building blocks essential for future learning as children progress through pre-school and Reception. Topics such as 'A Place Called Home' help children gain knowledge about where they live and diverse types of families. Reading traditional tales, such as 'The Three Little Pigs', develops children's vocabulary and links to their learning in science about materials. Such activities help children to practise and remember information that they will revisit later in the school's curriculum.

The teaching of early reading, writing and mathematics is highly effective. Staff plan activities carefully so children succeed and are not overwhelmed by tasks that are too complicated. Partnership work with parents and carers strongly supports children's development.

Children enjoy the range of meaningful experiences across the wider curriculum. Teachers adjust the curriculum, when necessary, to meet the needs of individuals and cohorts. For example, staff use collaborative LEGO activities to develop children's communication and language successfully when working in small groups.

Care practices in the early years are respectful and well thought out. Staff have clear plans and procedures in place for any children who require them. This helps to support regular attendance. All children are well supported, enabling them to fully participate in school life.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Durweston is a highly inclusive school. Leaders know pupils and their families very well. Leaders' oversight of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is comprehensive. Leaders identify any barriers to learning in a timely manner. This ensures that support is quickly put in place to help pupils overcome any difficulties they may have. Effective training ensures that staff have the depth of knowledge to reduce barriers to learning successfully. Approaches are effective across all subjects.

Training ensures all staff provide consistent and effective support for pupils. Teachers expertly adjust activities during everyday teaching so pupils gain the knowledge, skills and

understanding they need to achieve well. Staff carefully consider classroom layouts, and use specialist resources and personalised learning plans, to support pupils with SEND. When needed, pupils receive bespoke support. Teachers keep a close eye on the effect of approaches and adapt quickly if pupils need something different. Staff work closely with external professionals, parents and carers. Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate support during times of need.

Leaders use additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils well. This enables these pupils to take part fully in school life. This includes ensuring pupils access sport, art or musical clubs and providing additional academic support.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders are passionate and proud of the school's achievements. The school's culture and ethos create a 'family feel' for pupils and staff. Staff are well supported and share leaders' commitment to continued improvement. They work together to help pupils overcome gaps in their learning across the curriculum. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and wellbeing. Parents and carers speak positively about their children's experiences.

Leaders' detailed plans for improvement identify ambitious work to improve teaching, assessment and standards even further. Leaders are restless for even greater success. They ensure training to develop curriculum design and teaching is informed by research and is evidence based. Staff use this effectively. They follow a consistent approach to teaching that ensures pupils are well prepared for secondary school.

Support from the trust is precise, detailed and informative. Trust leaders identify exact areas for improvement across distinct aspects of the school's work. The trust's support helps teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Trustees use their understanding of the school's performance to challenge and support leaders. Clear reporting arrangements help the trust board make informed decisions that contribute to the quality of education. Local governors use their detailed knowledge of the school to support and challenge leaders effectively. They receive informative reports from the headteacher and use these to explore areas such as behaviour and attendance.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

The school's extensive personal development programme is highly effective. The themes 'service to others, connect with community and broaden horizons' capture the essence of the school. Special events, such as participating in the Blandford Yuletide lantern festival and maypole dancing in the village, enrich pupils' experiences and build their confidence.

Staff use their deep knowledge of pupils, their families and the local community to adapt what pupils learn. Planned activities and close liaison with parents and carers help pupils understand the risks linked to mobile phones. The digital citizenship programme develops pupils' understanding about internet use and harmful influences.

Leaders harness the generosity and support of their local community to enhance pupils' experiences. Visits to a local farm for all pupils develop their understanding of sustainability, food production and changes to farming over time. Pupils learn about and use the vegetables grown to make harvest soup.

Pupils understand that everyone is welcome at the school. They recognise the importance of respecting people's similarities and differences. Pupils learn about what makes a positive relationship. They have a developed understanding of different cultures and the festivals associated with them. Daily interactions reflect the school's values of courage, compassion and joy. The spiritual garden and 'space to be' club offer quiet places for pupils' reflection and pastoral support.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from the many leadership opportunities available to them. Roles such as play leaders, worship leaders, school representatives and guinea pig monitors help pupils develop maturity and independence. Older pupils support and show empathy towards their younger peers. At lunchtimes, they share their tables and help with younger pupils' organisation and tidying up. Leaders check attendance at clubs to encourage more pupils to take part in activities such as cross country, tag rugby and tennis. Leaders' oversight ensures that pupils participate fully.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enter this welcoming village school, chatting with their friends, excited about the activities that lie ahead. When they leave Year 6, pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. They represent their school with maturity and want to do their best. They take their leadership responsibilities seriously. Older pupils show the positive influence they have on the school community when supporting and encouraging younger children.

Leaders' actions ensure all pupils can and do succeed personally and academically. Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations of behaviour. Very few ever need reminding of how to act. Bullying is very rare. If it does happen, it is dealt with promptly. Consequently, pupils feel happy and safe.

Pupils' wellbeing is an important aspect of leaders' work. Staff meet and greet pupils, parents and carers at the gate each morning, checking how they are. Teachers put the right help in place for pupils who need extra support. Leaders use specialist wellbeing support for any pupils who need it. This helps to ensure that pupils learn successfully and attend much more regularly than in the past. Pupils trust adults in school to help them and know who to talk to if something is worrying them.

Pupils learn about interesting local events that impact on their lives, for example why they can no longer travel on the 'Trailway' rail line from Bath to Bournemouth or how Durnovaria, the Roman town of Dorchester, has changed over time. Such activities build their deep understanding of locality alongside their cultural identity.

Parents recognise the work leaders do to support pupils and enrich their experiences. Pupils benefit from memorable experiences, including 'shroving' around Durweston village or

kayaking on the River Stour to Blandford. Pupils enthusiastically take part in the wide range of activities on offer.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop teachers' subject-specific pedagogical knowledge even further so that teaching enables pupils to deepen their knowledge to a greater extent across the whole curriculum.

About this inspection

This school is part of the Diocese of Salisbury 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 (CEO), Mark Lacey, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Sian Thornton.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and a group of staff to consider their views. The lead inspector held a discussion with the CEO, deputy CEO and regional director of education from the trust and members of the trust board and local academy standards and ethos committee.

Inspectors visited lessons to look at pupils' work and the curriculum and to speak with pupils about their learning and wider school activities.

Inspectors spoke with some parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Jennifer McMullen

Lead inspector:
Richard Light, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Phil Minns, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

140
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

140
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

10.57%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.57%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.57%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	80%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23		60%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	100%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	95%	74%	Above
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	80%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	63%	72%	Below
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	100%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	95%	73%	Above
2022/23		73%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.9%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.2%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	17.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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