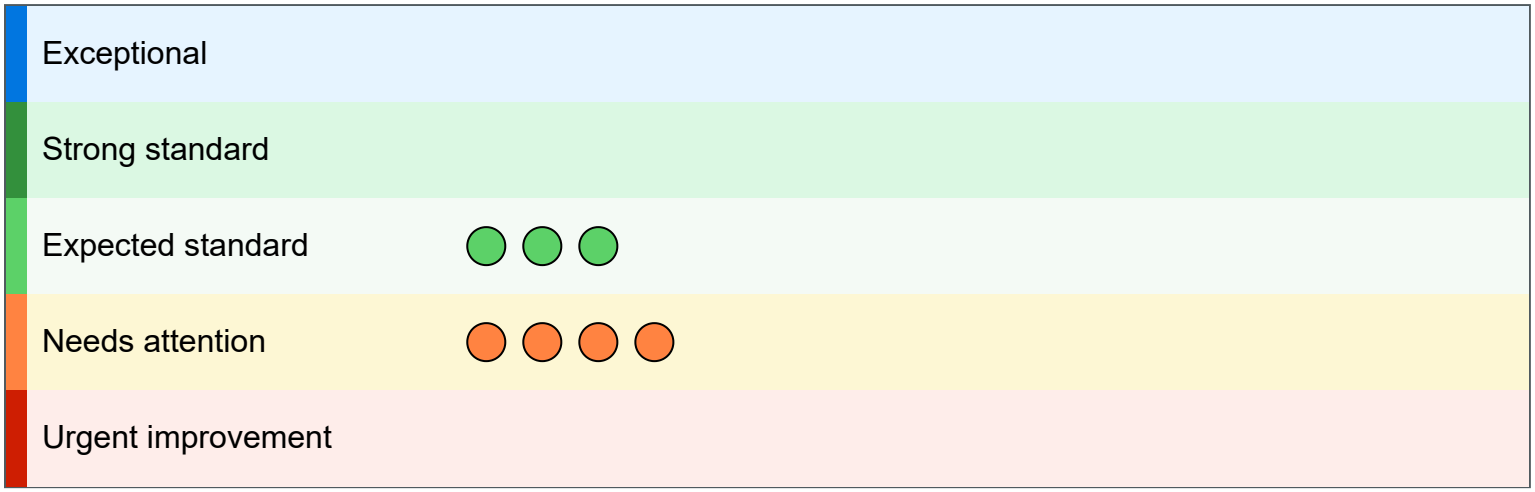
Charmouth Primary School

Address: Lower Sea Lane, Charmouth, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 6LR

Unique reference number (URN): 150208

Inspection report: 30 June 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.

Expected standard

Early years

Expected standard

Children’s knowledge, skills and understanding of early reading, writing and mathematics are building securely. Staff routinely check that errors in letter formation and early writing are tackled quickly. They develop children’s mathematical language when they share, respond, expand and talk about their thinking. Staff adapt the phonics scheme carefully, so children can focus. Children learn phonics confidently.

The early years curriculum is balanced. Careful planning helps children enrich their learning when playing in the classroom, or when outside. Children sustain their learning and deepen their interests. Staff routinely extend children’s ideas and vocabulary, and ensure all areas of learning are being covered. Natural processes spark children’s imagination when counting how many potatoes have grown in the school’s growbags. Children are enthralled when new chicks are born in the class incubator. Staff checks on children’s learning and development are well considered. They adapt activities diligently based on this information. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

Staff use high-quality texts to link learning and develop children’s understanding. They select books that enhance children’s knowledge of rhythm and rhyme and expand their vocabulary. Children build secure relationships with adults and learn how to socialise with their friends. Children in Nursery receive sensitive care to meet their personal needs.

Inclusion

Expected standard

The school identifies barriers for pupils with social, emotional and health needs in a detailed, timely and accurate manner. Staff use this information to create personalised learning plans that identify clear, precise approaches to help pupils overcome barriers and manage their emotions. This helps many pupils improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Staff support the small steps needed for pupils’ pastoral development carefully and sensitively. Key adults, special time, safe-base routines, visual timetables and now-and-next boards all provide effective support. Staff apply these approaches particularly well for children known to social care and those with the most acute emotional needs. Staff share plans with parents, carers and pupils, ensuring that everyone remains involved throughout the process.

Staff adapt their approaches to supporting pupils' emotional needs precisely. The same level of quality to support pupils' academic needs is developing. Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils appropriately.

Historically, some parents raised concerns about the school's approach to inclusion and its impact on their own child's education. Current school leaders engage effectively with parents and provide clear guidance on approaches and expectations. External specialists contribute effectively to pupil support and help the school make adaptations that increasingly meet pupils’ academic and wider needs.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The personal development curriculum supports pupils effectively. Pupils learn about factors that have an impact on their mental health and how to overcome them. When needed, leaders use targeted interventions to help pupils be ready for learning in the classroom. Partnership work with other professionals ensures pupils are equipped to know how to manage their emotions and live healthy lifestyles.

Leaders link elements of the curriculum to enhance pupils' learning effectively. Pupils plan enterprise activity sales for organised events, which enhances their economic understanding. They learn about democracy when studying the ancient Greeks in history. They understand the significance of people from the past, and their importance to local history, such as Mary Anning's work on The Jurassic Coast. Their talents and interests are celebrated in assemblies and their academic and personal achievements rewarded.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to build their ability to reflect and understand matters from the wider world. Pupils understand concepts such as individual liberty. They know that every individual is unique and valued. Pupils have a sound understanding of treating all fairly. This contributes to pupils' understanding of healthy relationships.

Pupils' safety is enhanced through the curriculum. They learn about water safety and how to stay safe on the nearby Charmouth beach. The digital programme helps pupils to develop a secure understanding of online risks when using the internet.

Alongside the taught curriculum, visits to local beaches, musicals and sports events enrich pupils' experiences. Their views inform the range of Friday enrichment activities available. Leaders track and support full participation in any activity. Residential experiences for older pupils build their confidence to tackle unfamiliar challenges.

The range of activities available develops pupils' self-awareness, independence and character. The supportive environment ensures that pupils confidently express their thoughts, or ask questions. Pupils develop into thoughtful citizens.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Pupils' progress is inconsistent across different ages and subjects. It speeds up and slows down as pupils move through the school. For many pupils, they reach the standards expected of them by the time they leave Year 6. For others, they are not securing a firm grasp of letter formation, handwriting and spelling. The quality of current work in pupils' books is variable across the school. Books show repeated spelling errors and often handwriting is not improving.

Younger pupils achieve well in early reading, writing and the number knowledge needed for later success. However, writing activities for lower key stage 2 pupils are not sequenced to enable their knowledge and skills to advance effectively.

In foundation subjects, pupils can recall some prior content, but this varies. Teaching is not supporting their deeper learning. For a few disadvantaged pupils, the curriculum is limited in history and geography, hampering their better achievement.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Despite leaders' best efforts, pupils' attendance remains below the expected levels. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attend regularly. Persistent absence remains high. Staff know families and their individual circumstances well. They use this knowledge to provide bespoke support to help overcome barriers that prevent pupils from attending regularly. Current rates of attendance are improving. Leaders know there is more to do. For a small number of pupils who struggle the most, staff use part-time timetables with achievable steps to help them return to school with confidence.

Generally, pupils are polite and normally behave well. Positive and respectful relationships between pupils and adults lead to pupils feeling emotionally secure. Staff reinforce expectations through a warm and kind approach. Pupils understand the school rules and have trusted adults they can rely on for support. Playtimes are normally positive, with pupils interacting well and engaging in organised activities. Bullying is rare. In classes, pupils are generally attentive and engage well in learning and with each other. For a small number of children who struggle with their emotions, staff expertly adjust their expectations through detailed personal plans. Although some parents and pupils report mixed experiences of behaviour at school, they recognise the school is improving.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

The curriculum is inconsistently taught because teachers' subject knowledge is mixed. Staff use different approaches to the teaching of mathematics and checking pupils' learning. At times, adults are not deployed for maximum impact on pupils' learning. Some choices of reading texts are not well matched to pupils' ability, leading to confusion or misunderstandings. Combined with some weaknesses in curriculum sequencing, pupils' achievement is varied.

Some staff do not promote high expectations for all. Handwriting and presentation are varied. In mathematics, some pupils become confused when staff do not show them how to set their work out properly in columns when adding and subtracting.

Teaching is more precise when delivering new content. However, staff do not use checks on pupils' knowledge to ensure learning builds incrementally on what pupils know and can do. Consequently, some pupils move on to new content before they are ready and do not build on prior learning, and gaps in knowledge persist.

Teaching for younger pupils is securing their early writing and mathematical knowledge effectively. Teachers use a range of approaches that support pupils to acquire the grounding they need for future learning. The teaching of early reading is precise and specifically addresses pupils' phonics knowledge.

Leadership and governance **Needs attention**

Overall, Charmouth is an improving school. However, challenges in maintaining steady and secure staffing, including in leadership, has hampered more rapid improvement. Actions show limited impact to attendance and behaviour, curriculum and teaching, and pupils' achievement. Leaders' checks on improving teaching have not had the desired impact.

Current leaders are taking the right action in the right areas. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Moral and ethical decisions characterise leaders' choices and place the interests of pupils at their heart. Actions are improving the early years, inclusion and pupils' personal development.

Trustees have a clear oversight of the school. They put in challenge and support as required. Leaders are considerate about staff workload and wellbeing. They take actions at the school and trust to support staff.

The professional learning curriculum for staff is aligned to the school's priorities. Leaders have considered carefully what to focus on. Actions are starting to have an impact on teaching and improvements to the personal development curriculum.

Leaders have built strong relationships with other trust schools, the local authority and other external agencies. They work well with the local mathematics and English hubs to improve the teaching and achievement of pupils.

Leaders' work to engage positively with families has had varied success. Whereas many parents recognise the school is improving, some still harbour concerns about historical approaches related to inclusion. Leaders rightly recognise the need to broaden the confidence of the community in the school's work.

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

At Charmouth, pupils learn in a caring and supportive school. Adults prioritise their safety, wellbeing and personal development. Staff know pupils well and build strong, trusting relationships, particularly with pupils who need additional emotional support. Nurturing approaches, sensitive practice and detailed, personalised plans help pupils feel safe and understood. Many pupils report that adults help them manage their emotions and stay engaged in learning, especially when they feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Pupils receive clear explanations and structured support. In early years and key stage 1, teachers deliver phonics effectively and help pupils develop early reading, writing and number skills with confidence. Pupils enjoy practical activities, such as exploring lifecycles or working with practical resources in mathematics. This helps them understand new concepts. In some classes, staff's expectations of pupils are lower. At times, adults prioritise emotional support over clear academic guidance. This leads to variations in the progress pupils make, the quality and presentation of their work.

The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects and engaging experiences. Pupils learn about science, humanities and personal development through activities and wider

opportunities, including outdoor learning. Older pupils benefit from clear sequencing of knowledge, particularly in subjects like science. However, curriculum coverage and expectations are uneven in some year groups, which can affect how well pupils build on prior learning.

Most pupils are polite, friendly and cooperative, and routines such as lunchtime transitions run smoothly. Some pupils report past concerns about poor behaviour or name-calling. However, most recognise that behaviour is calmer and improving. Staff are increasingly consistent in their approach, although some minor variation remains.

Pupils feel valued and increasingly ready to learn. They develop an understanding of their own cultural heritage when learning about Charmouth. They are proud of its global importance, including understanding how fossils help archaeologists learn about the past.

Next steps

- Leaders should raise pupils' achievement further, so that their knowledge and skills are equally secure across all subjects and age groups.
- Leaders should ensure that pupils progress consistently well across key stage 2, especially when writing, so they can produce high-quality work across the curriculum.
- Leaders should make sure that staff use checks on learning to adapt the curriculum and teach it well so pupils can build on prior learning successfully.
- Leaders should ensure that the school's attendance strategy consistently improves pupils' attendance and reduces rates of absence.
- Leaders, particularly those responsible for governance from the trust, should challenge the impact of actions taken to improve teaching and monitor their impact more effectively.
- Leaders should continue to work in partnership with the parental community, so all pupils benefit fully from the school's whole education offer.

About this inspection

This school is part of The First Federation Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Walker, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Alex Walmsley.

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.

Inspectors spoke with the interim head of school, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and a group of staff to consider their views. The lead inspector held discussions with the chief executive officer and director of education from the trust and members of the trust board and local hub board.

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

Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. They 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 use any alternative provision.

Interim Head of School: Sarah Elliott-Judge

Lead inspector:
Richard Light, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:
Anna Mills, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from different sources. More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 30 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

81
Well 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

150
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)

28.17%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

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

7.41%
Well above 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

32.10%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support 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 (final)	67%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	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 (final)	93%	75%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
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 (final)	87%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
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 (final)	80%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	93%	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 (final)	S	47%	S
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 (final)	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 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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 (final)	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%	

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	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 (final)	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 (final)	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 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
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 (3 term)	7.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.5%	5.5%	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 (3 term)	22.9%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	14.3%	14.6%	Close to average

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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