

Inspection of Puddletown Church of England First School

Dorchester Road, Puddletown, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8FZ

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Anna Seal. 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 (CEO), Mike Foley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Baker. There is also an executive headteacher, Joe Bell, who is responsible for this school and seven others.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for pupils to thrive. It ensures that pupils are surrounded by care and high expectations. The school focuses on making every moment count. Staff make learning interesting, and pupils contribute eagerly during lessons. Pupils rise to meet these expectations and are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils behave well and feel safe. As a result, pupils are attentive in lessons and focus on their learning. Staff know all the pupils very well, a view shared by parents who say the school is 'a warm and welcoming school where every child is valued'. There are trusting and warm relationships with staff that mean pupils know they are safe and well cared for. They trust adults to help them. They know who to speak with if they have any worries or concerns.

Pupils are proud to take on leadership roles, such as being part of the school council, where they value being able to make a difference. They feel listened to and believe they can help improve their school. This caring and respectful culture of collective responsibility helps pupils to prepare for life beyond school.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has worked decisively to improve provision for pupils. Trustees and governors have a strong and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use their knowledge to challenge and support leaders appropriately.

Pupils learn the curriculum well overall. Teachers present information clearly and model new learning well. In most cases, teaching ensures that the learning activities pupils complete are well matched to the intended learning. For example, pupils learn a wide range of strategies to select from when performing calculations with money. However, during lessons, routine checks of pupils' understanding are not carried out consistently. As a result, teaching is not always adapted in response to pupils' needs so that everyone keeps up with the learning. This means that some pupils do not build their understanding of essential knowledge so find it difficult to remember their learning.

The school places reading at the heart of its curriculum. Pupils become skilful fluent readers from the start. Staff deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Children in Reception Year learn the letters and sounds to read words confidently. They enjoy the many high-quality books their teachers read to them. As pupils continue to develop their reading skills, the school puts in place well-considered strategies to support those who need additional help to catch up quickly.

The school is developing the expertise of staff to understand and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most staff provide suitable extra resources and adapt tasks well for pupils. However, this is not consistent. Sometimes, tasks do not enable pupils to learn the curriculum effectively. When this

happens, some pupils do not secure the key ideas they need to learn and do not achieve as well as they could.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Staff celebrate pupils' contributions to school life and their achievements. Pupils are proud when they are recognised as a 'shining light' in weekly celebration assemblies. Pupils are keen to learn and achieve. The learning environment around the school is calm and purposeful. In lessons, pupils listen well and engage in learning opportunities with enthusiasm. Pupils are focused and motivated to learn. Pupils are polite, friendly and eager to talk about school life.

The provision for pupils' personal development is effective and underpinned by the school's values. Through the school's personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn the importance of being active, respectful citizens. They consider the potential risks and issues in their local area and how to stay safe. The school provides high-quality pastoral support to promote pupils' well-being. Pupils learn to understand and value the differences between people. They are well prepared for their future lives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school does not ensure that pupils with SEND consistently have tasks which are matched to their needs and challenges. This makes it hard for some pupils to secure new learning and progress through the curriculum as well as they can. The trust should ensure that teachers have the expertise to consistently provide precise, well-matched provision for pupils with SEND so they can achieve well.
- In some subjects, teachers do not always check what pupils have understood, and lessons are not always adapted as necessary. This means that pupils are not always building their essential knowledge or remembering what they have learnt. The trust needs to ensure that teachers check the explicitly identified important content is securely in place so that all pupils build their knowledge well.

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	141806
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10344690
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Baker
CEO of the trust	Mike Foley
Headteacher	Anna Seal
Website	www.puddletownfirst.dorset.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Puddletown Church of England First School is part of the Wessex Multi Academy trust.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Salisbury. The school received its most recent section 48 inspection under the Education Act 2005 for schools of a religious character in November 2022.
- The school does not currently use alternative provisions.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

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 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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, 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. The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders, including those who are responsible for attendance, behaviour, early years, SEND and pupils' personal development.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO and executive headteacher from the trust. A meeting was also held with members of the governing body and the board of trustees.
- Inspectors talked with staff about their workload and well-being.
- 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 of safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the end of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Paul Walker, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Deborah Wring

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