

Bickleigh on Exe Church of England Primary School

Address: Bell Meadow, Bickleigh, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 8RE

Unique reference number (URN): 137776

Inspection report: 2 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have effective systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance closely. They ensure that high attendance is the expectation for pupils when they start at the school. Leaders model a warm and welcoming start to the school day, which is replicated by pupils and parents and carers on arrival. Leaders identify any barriers to attendance promptly. They are sensitive and personable in the strategies they implement to overcome them. This leads to rapid improvements in attendance for individual pupils, on the rare occasion it falls short of the school's high expectations.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Classrooms are calm and focused learning environments. As a result, pupils' dedication to learning and self-discipline appears effortless. Pupils take pride in how well they conduct themselves across the school day. They support each other in maintaining this culture of high standards, which has become the norm.

Leaders and staff promote highly positive, nurturing relationships with pupils. These begin in the pre-school. Pupils who require additional support to manage their emotions or actions benefit from the adjustments made to enable them to flourish. Any discriminatory behaviour, including bullying, is rare. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are encouraged to speak out if they have any concerns about the conduct of their peers.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils typically achieve well across the curriculum. From the pre-school onwards, leaders prioritise the important knowledge and skills in reading, writing and number. This early knowledge helps pupils to access the later curriculum with confidence and secure published outcomes that are typically in line with national averages. For pupils working at a greater depth of learning, leaders are strengthening teaching to adapt to, and increase, challenge. This is in order to secure a more consistent trend in outcomes at this higher level, particularly in mathematics, reading and grammar, spelling and punctuation.

On the whole, in the wider curriculum, pupils learn the key knowledge expected in most subjects. This can be seen in the learning they recall and their work in books. Staff's inclusive practices ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with other barriers to learning, get the support they need to achieve well from their starting points. This reduces the gaps in learning and development that may exist between them and their peers when they start school. Pupils are prepared well for their next step in education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is ambitious and sequenced well. Key knowledge is identified clearly so that pupils build their knowledge over time and can access appropriate learning for their age within mixed-age classes. Leaders have refined the curriculum offer to strengthen some subjects in the wider curriculum. They are working to ensure that the curriculum is secure across all subjects, for all classes.

On the whole, teachers present information clearly and engage pupils well. This has been a crucial part of securing pupils' excellent learning behaviours. Staff have secure subject knowledge which they use to design lessons that adjust to the range of needs and abilities in each class. Staff regularly check any gaps in pupils' learning and address these quickly. This is more effective in English and mathematics. Leaders monitor the teaching of the curriculum closely. They target staff's professional learning well to strengthen teaching expertise across all staff roles.

Phonics teaching is effective. It impacts positively on children as they learn to read. Beyond phonics, pupils develop reading skills such as expression, inference and deduction. In writing, from the early years, pupils follow a clear structure that supports them to write successfully. This is celebrated on each class writing wall. The mathematics curriculum ensures that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, become fluent in applying their knowledge of number when explaining their thinking and solving mathematical problems.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children across the early years develop the knowledge and skills they need for future success, including in early reading, writing and mathematics. There is a clear focus on communication and language. Staff typically engage in high-quality interactions with children across the pre-school and Class 1. These encourage and promote children's curiosity and independence.

Leaders focus on early identification of potential barriers to learning and development. This information is used to ensure that learning activities provide multiple ways for children to engage. Staff adapt and tailor the provision to meet the range of needs across the pre-school and Class 1. On the whole, teaching and learning activities enable children to explore, revisit and refine important skills. For example, this year there has been a focus on developing children's fine motor skills. Close and effective links with parents and carers support children's wellbeing and learning. This further strengthens children's preparation, academically and socially, for Year 1 and beyond.

Staff establish clear, consistent routines and expectations to help children to feel secure at school. Knowledgeable staff hold high expectations of the children. These, along with the well-designed learning environment, support children to sustain attention, collaborate, negotiate and think critically. This underpins the high standards in learning behaviours and conduct seen across the rest of the school.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have established an inclusive culture across the school. They have focused on adapting and adjusting pupils' learning and experience of school so that barriers to learning or wellbeing are addressed. This is particularly effective for pupils' social, emotional and pastoral needs.

Staff benefit from professional learning to strengthen their knowledge and expertise of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities and other barriers that they may present with. As a result, these are identified accurately, and at the earliest opportunity. However, individual plans, and precise details of the support that pupils may need to enhance their education, are not always as accurate and precise as they could be. At times, plans can lack clarity and do not address fully what is needed above and beyond the school's core education provision. This can hinder the full impact on pupil outcomes, particularly academically. While documentation does not always align with provision, leaders monitor the impact of the support pupils receive, for their learning and their wellbeing. They make adjustments swiftly and effectively if they notice something is not working well.

Leaders form effective relationships with other professionals. This ensures specialist input and advice is provided where needed. Leaders are tenacious in following this up and challenging where anything falls short of their high expectations for inclusion. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils, is used wisely as part of the school's inclusive offer.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders are dedicated to getting the very best from pupils at the school. They strive to make a success of the challenges, as well as the positives, brought by the unique context of the school. There is clarity in the governance roles that support and challenge the school's leadership. Those responsible for governance are well informed about the school's strengths and ongoing priorities. The school has been part of a merger between 2 multi-academy trusts since it was last inspected. The new trust structures were built on what was in place previously. They provide helpful systems and collaboration opportunities to drive continual school improvement.

Staff feel supported, listened to and valued. They share leaders' commitment to continued improvement. They receive the professional learning and development that gives them the skills and expertise to address school priorities. This includes the current focus on adapting teaching to meet the breadth of needs and abilities in each class.

Leaders' plans for improvement, and their checks on teaching, generally identify the further work needed to improve standards across the school. This informs leaders' actions, such as strengthening the curriculum in some wider curriculum subjects and focusing on approaches to develop high-quality interactions in the early years. This is secure and impactful in some areas. Other areas are earlier in development. The rigour and detail in leaders' checks do not always fully enhance and reflect pupils' learning and development, such as in the 'school-based plans' which detail support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other barriers to learning.

Parents and carers speak positively about their children's experiences. They form an effective part of the caring community, which includes leaders' effective engagement with other professionals, that wraps around pupils at the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an appropriate and ambitious personal development programme. The effective personal, health, social and education curriculum is an important part. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of keeping themselves safe online and in their communities. They know when to seek help from a trusted adult. Pupils learn about positive and safe relationships. However, some do not recall the full extent of this learning.

Assemblies are focal points for coming together as a school community. They serve to celebrate pupil success and achievements, as well as develop greater awareness of fundamental British values and the ethos that underpins the school's welcoming and respectful culture.

Leaders capitalise on what trips out of school can offer in terms of diversity and cultural experiences. However, the extent of pupils' awareness of the wider world is not as thorough as it could be. For example, pupils describe and demonstrate an understanding of respect and tolerance for disabilities. They are aware of some different cultures and value the work with their link school in Uganda. However, pupils are not able to explore this knowledge in depth. They do not typically show a detailed recall of religious knowledge, beyond Christianity. They do, however, show much understanding of spirituality, moral education and the values rooted in the school ethos.

Leaders' consideration for opportunities beyond the classroom broadens pupils' school experience. For example, there are a range of extra-curricular clubs and pupils participate in sporting events, music lessons and performances. Pupil leadership roles include school councillors and monitors to help with jobs around the school. Many pupils opt to take on responsibilities such as mentoring and supporting younger pupils on the playground. This is a notable impact of the strong relationships modelled by the whole school community. It develops independence and confidence as pupils prepare for secondary school.

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

Pupils at Bickleigh on Exe are rightly proud of their inclusive and nurturing school. They keenly detail the wealth of positives that the school offers them. Pupils enthuse about their academic learning as well as the range of opportunities they experience beyond the classroom. These include trips to enhance the curriculum, extra-curricular clubs and residential visits to build secure relationships at the beginning of the school year.

Pupils want to be in school and do well due to the appropriate and responsive adaptations that staff make to teaching and the learning environment. Any barriers to learning or wellbeing that pupils have are identified early. This leads to high attendance and pupils achieving well over time, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It prepares them well for the academic rigour of secondary school.

Pupils describe a safe and trusted view of school and its staff. This is evident to visitors and parents and carers in the caring and highly positive relationships across the whole school community. Pupils feel confident in speaking up, expressing their views and opinions. Pupils do not worry about bullying or poor behaviour. They say that this is rare and dealt with well by staff. Pupils benefit from the calm and purposeful learning environment, underpinned by high expectations of conduct and attitudes to learning. Pupils embody the school's high standards and golden values in their own actions and interactions because staff model and uphold these consistently. This is fully supported by the school's Christian religious character. For example, pupils support, encourage and play harmoniously on the playground and the show courtesy and kindness to everyone as they move around the school. These core, moral values give pupils the foundations to thrive beyond their time at primary school.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen and embed the curriculum offer so it is as strong in all areas and subjects as the strongest practice seen and increases the impact on pupil outcomes.
 - Leaders should ensure that the quality and precision of pupils' individual plans fully reflect, support and enhance the inclusive practice that is in place for pupils, inside and beyond the classroom.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils' knowledge of the wider world is more secure and detailed, so that pupils continue to flourish beyond Bickleigh on Exe.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Harbour Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Gary Chown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sean Mackney.

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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the trust education partner, other school senior leaders and staff during the inspection. In addition, the lead inspector spoke with the trust's CEO, the chair of the trust board and the chair of the local governing board.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is in the Diocese of Exeter. Its last section 48 inspection was in June 2023.

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The school was part of a multi-academy trust which merged with another trust to form Harbour Schools Partnership. This took place in April 2025. The school has made changes to its leadership team in the last academic year.

Headteacher: Stephen Bosley

Lead inspector:

Leanne Thirlby, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Suzannah Teagle, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

150

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)

2.46%

Well 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

2.67%

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

16.67%

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

Well below 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	57%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	52%	60%	Close to average

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	71%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	75%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	73%	Below

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	75%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	81%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	79%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

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	69%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	81%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	62%	73%	Below

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	13%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S

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

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	13%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

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	25%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

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	13%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘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	13%	68%	-55 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

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	13%	80%	-67 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

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	25%	78%	-53 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

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	13%	80%	-67 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

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

‘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)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.0%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	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 (3 term)	8.5%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.7%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	12.3%	16.2%	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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