

Lipson Vale Primary School

Address: Bernice Terrace, Lipson, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 7HW

Unique reference number (URN): 113298

Inspection report: 12 May 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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Typically, pupils progress well through the reading, writing and mathematics curriculums. Published outcomes show that pupils' attainment is improving over time. More pupils are better prepared for the next stage of their education. Outcomes in the Year 4 multiplication check and phonics screening check are generally in line with national averages. Disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with disadvantaged pupils nationally. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well across the curriculum. Despite this, not enough pupils reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils demonstrate their knowledge and skills across the curriculum through high-quality discussions. For example, they confidently discuss learning about forces and, in particular, the work of scientists such as Galileo and Isaac Newton. Younger pupils demonstrate secure pencil grip and letter formations from the start. They are able to write with consistency and fluency and build their knowledge of number logically.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed and strengthened the school's curriculum. The curriculum is sequenced carefully from the early years to the end of Year 6 so that pupils build their knowledge, understanding and skills progressively. Leaders have a clear expectation with regard to how teachers should deliver lessons. Teachers ensure that pupils learn the right things at the right time. As a result, pupils learn and remember what they are supposed to.

Staff consider the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and usually adapt lessons well, enabling pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. Staff check pupils' understanding of the curriculum regularly, which helps pupils to confidently recall their learning. For example, pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning of the Victorian period and how their school trips help them understand what life was like in different historical periods.

From the early years onwards, staff focus appropriately on teaching children to read, write and use mathematics effectively. When children find reading difficult, staff provide effective support to help them catch up quickly. Staff also provide opportunities for pupils to develop their handwriting. For example, pupils respond well to individual handwriting targets and support that helps them to improve their written work.

Early years

Expected standard 

School leaders have prioritised the early years over the last few years. The curriculum is now well designed and covers the expectations of the early years foundation stage. Staff teach the curriculum well and ensure that children are well cared for. They carefully adapt the provision to meet the needs of the children. However, at times, the aims of some learning activities are too general. This prevents some children from developing the precise skills and knowledge they need to progress well across the curriculum.

Children build the foundations for reading in the early years through the support of well-trained staff. By identifying opportunities to use ambitious vocabulary, teachers ensure that children hear language that supports their learning. For example, children confidently use language such as 'giant' and 'magical' when re-telling the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Children also benefit from a well-structured phonics programme. Staff carefully check that children apply this knowledge when reading and writing, helping children to grow in confidence.

Children take turns and share when learning with their friends. For example, they work collaboratively in pairs to build train tracks. In the main, children focus on tasks and behave sensibly. However, at times, staff's expectations of behaviour are not high enough. When this occurs, it impacts negatively on children's learning.

Children in the early years typically achieve well. They are well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear strategy to provide pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those previously known to social care with a high-quality education. They identify pupils' needs early and ensure that barriers to learning, wellbeing and participation are clearly understood and addressed.

Leaders have established robust systems to identify pupils who require additional support. Staff use effective interventions and adaptations to learning to support pupils. This is particularly effective when supporting pupils with SEND in their phonics learning. However, the precision of adaptations in some lessons is not always consistent across the school. When staff do not adapt learning activities well enough, some pupils, including those with SEND, struggle to manage their emotions, which impacts negatively on their learning.

The use of alternative provision is carefully considered to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. The communication between the school and the provision is regular and informative.

School leaders have responded to the changing needs of the school's cohorts. The school's nurture room provides bespoke curriculum learning for some pupils with SEND. This helps them access learning that is appropriate for their needs.

Leaders have established a research-informed strategy to support disadvantaged pupils. They implement this approach effectively and have clear oversight of the impact it is having on pupils. This helps remove any barriers that disadvantaged pupils face to their learning.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders at Lipson Vale have a deep understanding of the community they serve. Decisions they make are in the best interests of the pupils. Leaders generally take appropriate action to improve key aspects of most of the school's work. For example, leaders have developed the early years provision successfully. This is having a positive impact on children's experiences. However, leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the way staff manage

pupils' behaviour and the impact this has on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Governors understand their strategic role. They provide challenge and support for leaders. Governors consider school development strategically. For example, they are knowledgeable about the requirements of opening a school breakfast club.

Leaders provide staff with a range of professional learning opportunities. Teachers appreciate these opportunities. For example, staff are positive about recent training on classroom teaching strategies and mental health awareness. This includes working with external professionals to train staff to deliver carefully tailored support for individual pupils. Staff value leaders' consideration of their workload and particularly appreciate time focused on their wellbeing.

Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school. They value the relationships that staff build with pupils and families. Most parents say their children are happy at the school and would recommend it to others. They recognise the positive progress that their children make. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities value the support they get. However, some parents feel that behaviour is not managed consistently.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have ensured that the school's personal development programme is coherent, broad and ambitious. It builds on pupils' understanding over time. Themes such as health and wellbeing, the wider world and families are a priority. Specific training for staff on mental health ensures secure teaching of the curriculum.

The local context of the school and the needs of pupils informs the personal development programme. For example, leaders develop pupils' life skills by providing experiences that pupils may not otherwise encounter. They do this through residential trips, which pupils recall with joy. Educational visits to cities in the wider region, places of worship and museums further enrich the curriculum. Assemblies are well designed to promote pupils' understanding of fundamental British values, diversity and cultural differences. Pupils are taught about different religions and beliefs. It covers the statutory requirements for relationships, health and sex education. Pupils have age-appropriate knowledge about healthy relationships and consent. Pupils are well informed about staying safe online. For example, workshops for parents and carers, and pupils, provide opportunities for discussions about online safety relating to the use of mobile phones.

The school's pastoral team is highly effective when considering pupils' wellbeing. The team makes sure that children have a positive start to the day. For example, the school provides children with breakfast in the mornings when needed.

The school provides a range of pupil leadership roles, including lunchtime peer mentors and school council representatives. These roles help pupils develop a rich understanding of responsibility. Pupils enjoy the role of 'eco-councillor', which helps them to understand how their actions affect the planet. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs. The school orchestra and choir are well attended. Pupils are proud to perform to their parents and the

wider community. Leaders check pupils' participation in these activities and intervene swiftly to ensure that all pupils take part. This includes those who are disadvantaged.

Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders and staff promote positive attendance. They have robust systems in place to track pupils' absence. They work in collaboration with families to identify barriers to attendance and provide suitable support to help them attend more regularly. The school's attendance rates are in line with the national average and are above average for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders take appropriate action when a pupil's absence causes concern. Attendance rates for pupils who are persistently absent are reducing over time.

Leaders have a clear strategy for improving behaviour. However, some staff have low expectations of how pupils behave. When this happens, distractions divert pupils from their learning. Some pupils do not know or follow the school rules when in classrooms. As a result, the lack of a calm and orderly environment hinders pupils' learning. Some staff do not apply training in the school's approach to managing behaviour accurately. Therefore, staff do not always deal with issues as effectively as they could. Leaders provide effective support to pupils who struggle to regulate their emotions. Incidents of bullying are rare, and staff take appropriate action when someone raises an incident.

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

Pupils feel welcomed at Lipson Vale. Soon after joining the school, pupils develop a sense of belonging, describing the school as a 'family'. Pupils enjoy being at school. They feel safe and attend well as a result. Most pupils speak highly of how school makes them feel. Staff take the time to get to know each pupil's unique characteristics. Pupils value this. All staff respond quickly with tailored support when pupils have any additional needs. Staff are always ready to listen if pupils have a problem or worry. The school's values are important to most pupils, who show resilience and self-belief.

Pupils are generally happy and kind in school. However, staff expectations of pupils' behaviour are not consistent across the school. This means that pupils' experiences of learning are not as positive as they could be, which, in turn, means that they do not learn as well as they could. Despite the inconsistencies that exist, leaders check behaviour closely and follow clear procedures if a pupil reports any discrimination, however rare that might be.

Historically, pupils' academic outcomes have not been as secure as they need to be. However, leaders are ambitious for pupils' academic achievement. Pupils generally develop their understanding of the curriculum over time. They are proud of learning many interesting things, such as how rivers and mountains form. The reading book vending machine inspires pupils to read. The rewards system, where pupils win books, is a huge success. So much so

that some pupils have read over 4 million words this year. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn within the community. They enjoy visits to local churches and take part in local litter picking to keep the area clean and tidy. School councillors talk with pride about how their roles help improve their school, for example by working with school leaders to develop the use of talk partners in lessons.

Next steps

- Leaders must ensure that staff receive the training they need to consistently apply the school's behaviour policy so that pupils behave well both inside and outside the classroom.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching consistently supports pupils to deepen their knowledge across subjects so they are well placed to achieve the higher standard.
 - Leaders should continue to develop the expertise of staff in the early years so that they provide children with learning activities that develop their knowledge, understanding and skills beyond the classroom.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Sally Wood.

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 headteacher, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mr Peter Lewis-Cole

Lead inspector:

Thomas Brewer, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Matthew Shirley, Ofsted Inspector

James Taylor, 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 12 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

400

Above 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

420

Above 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)

27.00%

Close to 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

3.75%

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

15.25%

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

Above 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	51%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	51%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	42%	60%	Below

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	64%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	69%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	56%	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	74%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	79%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	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	65%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

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	35%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	48%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24%	44%	Below

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	51%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	57%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	57%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	35%	60%	Below

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	70%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	65%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	83%	58%	Above
2022/23 (final)	59%	58%	Close to average

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	51%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	48%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	59%	59%	Close to average

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	35%	68%	-33 pp
2024/25 (final)	48%	69%	-21 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	24%	66%	-43 pp

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	51%	80%	-29 pp
2024/25 (final)	57%	81%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	57%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	35%	78%	-43 pp

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	70%	78%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	65%	78%	-13 pp
2023/24 (final)	83%	78%	5 pp
2022/23 (final)	59%	77%	-19 pp

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	51%	80%	-29 pp
2024/25 (final)	48%	81%	-33 pp
2023/24 (final)	48%	79%	-32 pp
2022/23 (final)	59%	79%	-20 pp

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)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.4%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	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)	12.4%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	17.1%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	20.9%	16.2%	Above

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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