

Inspection of Symondsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Symondsbury, Bridport, Dorset DT6 6HD

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Starting the day with energetic dancing, pupils are eager to come to school. The school encourages pupils to change the world through small actions. Pupils embrace this and independently act, such as planning charity events or caring for the environment.

The school has high expectations for pupils, both for their achievement and their conduct. Pupils achieve well. They enthuse about their learning. In lessons, they engage thoughtfully and are curious. For example, pupils learn a traditional medieval song to sing in their music lesson. They explore the lyrics with engrossment.

Pupils lead and take responsibility for others. They act as a community, showing consideration to one another across the age groups. Trained peer mentors help pupils if they are managing friendship difficulties. Older pupils are caring in their attitudes towards younger children.

The school provides pupils with exceptional experiences beyond the curriculum. Pupils learn from experts. For example, pupils work with professional musicians to learn about and perform operatic pieces. They spoke with human rights lawyers to develop their knowledge about the indigenous people of the Amazon to perform 'Yanomamo.' These experiences broaden pupils' horizons. It shapes their world views and inspires them to champion and celebrate cultures different from their own.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and broad curriculum. The concepts of legacy and the natural world run throughout the planned learning. The school makes clear the connections between what pupils learn and when so that pupils can build on what they have learned. In the early years, teachers communicate warmly with children. They introduce carefully chosen vocabulary to prepare the children with the knowledge and language they need as they progress towards key stage 1.

The curriculum is well-sequenced. Through reflection and revisiting knowledge, teachers check how well pupils can recall their learning. They act on this to plan what pupils need next to improve their learning. For example, in mathematics, teachers return to key learning at the start of lessons to help pupils secure their understanding before they move on. Some parts of the curriculum are more recently designed. The plan to teach pupils to write well is recently introduced. Pupils develop their writing inspired by a range of texts. However, opportunities to rehearse their writing more widely across the curriculum and practise their skills are less developed. As a result, pupils do not progress in their writing skills as effectively as they could.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. They plan bespoke and appropriate support to help pupils progress well through the curriculum. Focused training ensures that staff have the expertise to help pupils with a range of needs.

Pupils value reading highly. Children in early years learn their letter sounds and progress well to learning words. Teachers make sure pupils have additional help when they are unsure. The school has recently invested in a book scheme to help younger pupils practise their fluency as they become more independent readers. Pupils enjoy meeting authors and being part of a judging panel for national book awards. Some pupils relish exploring their love of words through the poetry club.

The school is robust in its expectations for pupils to come to school regularly. Pupils are eager to talk about their school. As a result, for all groups of pupils, attendance is high. Pupils behave exceptionally well. For example, when celebrating Victory in Europe day, they are respectful when taking poppies to church.

The design for the wider personal development of pupils is strongly engrained throughout the culture of the school. Through the personal, social, health education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils develop a deep understanding of the risks of being online and how to manage a digital presence. The school ensure that there are high-quality experiences, trips and clubs that are part of the 'Symondsbury story' for all. The vision to change the world has a tangible effect on pupils. For example, Year 3 pupils work as beekeepers and learn to care for the school bee hives. They understand the significance of this. Pupils thrive as a result of the active role they play across the school community and beyond.

Leaders are strategic in their evaluation and planning for the school's sustained improvement. The governing body effectively challenge and support the school in its work. The school ensures subject leaders have the time and opportunities to share their subject specialism effectively. Staff fully appreciate the way in which the school plan for managing workload. Parents praise the school highly for the work it does to provide their children with exceptional wider experiences that enhance the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for teaching pupils to write is newly implemented. The opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and rehearse the skills they have learnt are not built upon across the wider curriculum. The school should make sure the expectations for writing are extended across the breadth of the curriculum.

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	113815
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10378894
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alexandra O'Dwyer
Headteacher	Emma Roberts
Website	www.symondsbury.dorset.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school in the Diocese of Salisbury. The school's last Section 48 inspection took place in September 2019.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school provides before- and after-school care.

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 and/or sixth form 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out 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.
- To consider the curriculum further, the lead inspector met with the English subject lead, visited a music lesson and looked more widely at pupils' work.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, and teaching staff.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the local governing body including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors met with pupils to hear about their experiences of school. They observed the school during lesson times and break times.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, such as the school development plan, school evaluation documents and external reports, minutes from meetings of the governing body, and plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Wring

Ofsted Inspector

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