

Chilthorne Domer Church School

Address: Main Street, Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8RD

Unique reference number (URN): 123815

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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise improving pupils' attendance. The school has established clear processes in order to check on attendance for all pupils. Leaders work closely with families and other professionals to reduce barriers to pupils attending well. All staff play a key role in developing this positive culture. This high profile ensures that all stakeholders fully understand the impact of pupils' absences. As a result of this, attendance for most pupils is in line with the national average. Actions taken by leaders to improve attendance for particular groups and families are having a positive impact over time.

Pupils typically behave well. In most lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are keen to share their ideas with their peers. This means that pupils generally learn without interruption. Pupils know the difference between falling out and bullying. They know that discrimination exists in the outside world, but are adamant that it does not happen in school. Pupils are confident that if any incidents do occur, adults will deal with them quickly. They talk about the importance of kindness and inclusion. They welcome new pupils to their school with open arms.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. They have designed a curriculum that is carefully sequenced so that over time it supports pupils to build knowledge. Recent work in some subject areas is proving to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. For example, the recent reorganisation of the science curriculum supports the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary, which helps pupils to use this in their own work.

The emphasis on pupils securing the important basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is starting to come through pupils' work in key stage 1. Leaders know that gaps in older pupils' key skills continue to be a priority. Typically, teachers check on pupils' understanding of new concepts. However, at times, this lacks precision. As a result, some pupils do not build new knowledge as well as they could.

Teachers adapt the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where needed, pupils learn from a bespoke curriculum, based on their learning needs and starting points. This ensures that pupils with SEND and those with other challenges progress well through the curriculum and typically learn alongside their peers.

Early years

Expected standard 

Children get off to a great start in Reception Year. Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum that ensures children develop their knowledge well in all areas of learning in the early years. When children join the school, leaders identify those with barriers to learning or who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They closely monitor individual children's progress and act quickly to address any deficits in their skills and knowledge. As a result, children are well prepared for the demands of Year 1.

Leaders prioritise reading. From the day that children start school, they learn to read letters and sounds. The deliberate focus to develop children's pencil grip and letter formation is impressive. The classroom environment supports children to apply their writing knowledge in the different areas of learning. For example, children write signs to protect the bug homes they create.

Children develop an understanding of their emotions. Through the school's range of effective strategies, children learn to recognise how they feel. Children take turns and work collaboratively together. They collectively celebrate their successes. This creates a 'buzz' of excitement and curiosity.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is a highly inclusive school. Leaders and staff are determined that every pupil should fulfil their potential, regardless of their background. Leaders have recently refined systems for early identification of barriers for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are accurately identified. Teachers have recently received professional learning so they better understand the needs of these pupils. Typically, adaptations to learning support pupils to succeed. Leaders check pupils' progress closely, with a focus on pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. They quickly identify those who need to catch up and put suitable provision in place. This means that pupils succeed and engage well in learning.

Leaders identify the challenges that some disadvantaged pupils face. This includes pupils with parents and carers in the armed forces. Leaders use additional funding effectively. The school works closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils who are looked after or known to social care are supported well. Leaders commission the use of alternative provision with the best interests of pupils at the forefront. Regular reviews of targets and the impact of this work mean that leaders have a clear understanding of the progress these pupils make.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School leaders have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Those responsible for governance keep a close check on the duties that they have to carry out, including those in relation to safeguarding.

Governors understand their roles. However, at times, they do not consistently provide a rigorous level of challenge to leaders. This prevents governors from developing a well-informed view of the impact of leaders' actions, particularly on improving outcomes at key stage 2 for all pupils.

All staff are proud to be part of this school and its community. They appreciate and value the recent professional learning opportunities to develop their expertise, particularly in gaining a better understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff recognise the pressures of working in a small school for all of the team. However, they feel fully supported by leaders to manage their workload and wellbeing. Staff know that they can approach leaders at any time and that the 'headteacher's door is always open'.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its team of staff. They value the inclusive nature of the small school, where every child is welcomed and cared for.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's personal development programme is a strength. Leaders have designed a coherent programme that is adapted to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils with other challenges, fully benefit from this rich offer.

Pupils learn about relationships in an age-appropriate way. This begins in the early years where children learn to take turns and build friendships. Older pupils talk with maturity about the importance of healthy relationships. They understand key concepts such as personal space and use the 'hula hoop' analogy as a guide for this. Pupils learn about how their bodies change as they get older and how this can sometimes affect how they feel.

Pupils know that tolerance, inclusion and acceptance are important attributes. They learn about people from different faiths and cultures. Pupils have an impressive understanding of fundamental British values and know that voting is an important democratic process. They talk confidently about how some people have characteristics protected by law, which makes everyone unique.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of opportunities the school provides to develop their talents and interests. The wide range of clubs, including LEGO, sewing, dance and art, enables pupils to pursue their passion. Older pupils run a range of clubs for their peers. This helps to develop their confidence and organisational skills.

Visitors to the school support pupils' understanding of staying safe, including when online. Pupils learn how to stay safe in water and how to ride a bike safely on the roads. Visits to museums and residential trips enrich pupils' experiences beyond the classroom.

Pupils have a voice in the school. Through their roles and responsibilities, they are able to influence decisions. Playground leaders ensure that there is harmony during social times, and house captains ensure that sports days are well organised and run smoothly.

Pupils know they can influence change on a global scale. They are proud of the links they have with a school in Djibouti, where they donate school bags for children. Through the use of technology, pupils can see how these donations make a positive difference. All of this supports pupils to be well-rounded individuals.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Younger pupils achieve well in comparison to published outcomes in key stage 2. This is reflected in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the Year 4 multiplication tables check.

Therefore, these pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Over time, older pupils have not achieved well in reading, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Leaders' focused work to ensure that pupils secure the basic knowledge in these curriculum subjects is beginning to make a positive impact, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Work in pupils' books reflects an improving picture. However, it will take time for these improvements to be reflected fully in published outcomes. In some subjects in the wider curriculum, some pupils do not build knowledge as well as they should. Pupils struggle to recall what they have learned previously. As a result, some pupils have gaps in what they know and remember.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this warm and welcoming school. Staff know the pupils and their families well. They greet pupils at the start of each day with a smile and handshake. The positive relationships that staff forge with pupils and their families enable them to identify any barriers to learning and attendance at school. They work closely to provide the necessary support so that these barriers are reduced. As a result, most pupils attend well and feel safe.

Over time, pupils' achievement at key stage 2 is below that of their peers nationally. This includes the small number of pupils who are disadvantaged. However, leaders have acted decisively and put measures in place to improve pupils' attainment. Pupils achieve well in both the Year 1 phonics screening check, which is consistently above the national average, and in the Year 4 multiplication timetables check, which is close to national averages.

Pupils generally meet the school's high expectations for behaviour. This begins in the early years, where children follow the routines well. Children know that if they go 'out out' that they need a red band. Pupils are polite, kind and respectful of one another. They do not tolerate discrimination of any form. They know that adults would help them with any worries or concerns.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills are integral to the day-to-day life of the school. Older pupils take responsibility for younger children during social times. Digital leaders explain the impact of technology in the modern world and the benefits and drawbacks of using artificial intelligence. As a result, pupils understand the important role they play as responsible citizens and the difference they can make to their school community and beyond.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the checks teachers make on pupils' learning are secure so that pupils develop important knowledge in writing and mathematics and build on what has come before, so that they develop a depth of knowledge across the curriculum.

- Leaders should continue their work to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in reading, English grammar, punctuation and spelling, and mathematics, so that they build on the improvements already made.
 - Governors should deepen their understanding of the school's curriculum priorities so that they can continue to challenge and support leaders' work.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Peter Luscombe.

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, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and other members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors met with a group of staff, representatives from the local authority and representatives from the board of governors, including the chair of governors.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 3 unregistered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Nichola Chesterton

Lead inspector:

Wendy D'Arcy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Carl Thornton, 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

147

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

147

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)

15.65%

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

4.08%

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

8.84%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs 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	41%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	38%	61%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	65%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	68%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	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	67%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	60%	71%	Below

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	49%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	52%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	25%	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	25%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
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	58%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	67%	59%	Above
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	25%	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	25%	68%	-43 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	58%	80%	-21 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	67%	78%	-11 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	25%	80%	-55 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
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)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.6%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	4.5%	5.9%	Below

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)	11.7%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	17.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	7.1%	16.2%	Below

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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