

Shaftesbury Church of England Primary School

Address: Wincombe Lane, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 8PZ

Unique reference number (URN): 141810

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

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders are quick to identify any barriers that pupils may face. They work closely with a range of external professionals and therapists and use this information accurately to assess the ongoing needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ensures that these pupils usually get the right support at the right time. For example, pupils benefit from a range of visual or sensory resources so that they can access learning successfully. Ongoing staff training develops their expertise in supporting disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders monitor the impact of any additional teaching or support and make changes to provision when necessary.

The school's use of additional funding is having increasing impact. Leaders and staff review the support for disadvantaged pupils precisely. The school's provision for pupils who need a bespoke curriculum is effective in supporting these pupils to manage their emotions.

When necessary, leaders commission alternative provision for pupils. The school maintains appropriate oversight of pupils' attendance and the education these pupils receive when attending the alternative provision.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school is doing well and what it needs to improve. Over a sustained timespan, leaders have not shied away from making important decisions in the best interest of pupils. This has brought about much positive change already. For example, the sharper focus on the use of additional funding to increase the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is paying off. High-quality pastoral support ensures that pupils are ready to learn. Teaching is improving quickly. For example, the teaching of reading is effective across the school.

A comprehensive programme of professional development is ensuring that the school continues to improve. Staff value the bespoke support they receive month on month. The trust takes into account staff workload and wellbeing effectively.

Governors understand the school's context and the barriers pupils typically face. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and maintain oversight of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities particularly well. However, they do not have the same stringent level of oversight of the early years.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is ambitious, well sequenced and implemented effectively. The programme teaches pupils about fundamental British values and equalities. Whole-school initiatives such as the 'pupil parliament' teach pupils about democracy and how to become responsible young citizens. Pupils learn about right and wrong and know not to discriminate. Pupils take on a range of leadership responsibilities such as taking part in 'youth council'.

The school champions pupils' wider development and their physical and mental health through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. It teaches pupils about healthy eating, healthy lifestyles and maintaining positive relationships. Pupils learn about major world religions. The school provides pupils with many opportunities to experience the world beyond school, for example through visits to cultural and historical sites.

There is a range of pastoral and nurture support and short-term therapies in place, including for young carers. Pupils who access them benefit positively. This ensures their emotional needs are met. There are trusted adults on hand to discuss any concerns pupils have.

The relationships and sex and health education curriculum includes everything pupils need to learn. It teaches pupils about puberty and consent, for example. The school ensures that the personal development programme is continuously evolving. One example is the recent change to the online safety curriculum. Teaching now provides pupils with information about artificial intelligence and encourages them to critically evaluate and recognise fake material.

The school tracks pupils' participation in activities beyond the academic. This ensures that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, can access the opportunities that the school provides.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils have not been well prepared for secondary school. This is reflected in published outcomes that are significantly below national averages in mathematics and writing, including for disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills as a result of previous curriculums and teaching. Nonetheless, leaders' sustained work is making a palpable difference. As a result, more pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need in early reading. Pupils' understanding of problem-solving and reasoning is developing well. Many pupils are catching up now. For example, older pupils are learning how to write with better cohesion. Younger pupils are keeping up with the school's curriculum and learn the essential content they need in mathematics. A determined focus on improving pupils' handwriting is starting to pay off. Increasingly, pupils take pride in their work. Pupils are learning much more now in a range of subjects, for example in science.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders have strengthened their oversight of pupils' attendance markedly. The school monitors pupils' attendance and lateness stringently. Pupils' attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils, is beginning to improve as a result. Persistent absence is reducing in some but not all year groups. The school aspires to ensure that all pupils attend well. However, currently this is not the case. The school works closely with a range of external agencies when needed. This ensures that leaders support pupils and families effectively.

Pupils benefit from early morning routines and the caring support of staff. This ensures that pupils receive the pastoral support they need and get off to a calm start to the day. When pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions, including those who have bespoke curriculums, caring and skilled staff support pupils effectively. Pupils behave well at social times. However, there are occasions in class when staff do not model consistently high expectations. When this happens, pupils are not as productive in lessons as they could be. When teaching is not closely matched to pupils' needs and they get stuck, pupils can wait too long for help and go off task. Suspensions have decreased markedly. Pupils on part-time timetables build up their time in school incrementally.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

There is a broad, balanced and generally well-sequenced curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum across some subjects and classes. Leaders' work to bring about the necessary change is well underway and already having demonstrable impact. Teachers' expectations of what pupils will learn are increasing quickly as a result. Over time, leaders have ensured that a detailed programme of staff training to improve teaching is making a positive difference. This is evident in the consistent teaching methods in phonics and early writing composition. Pupils generally use their phonics knowledge well and learn to read successfully.

Teaching to ensure that pupils gain all the necessary knowledge that they did not secure in previous years is proving increasingly effective. However, there remain weaknesses in staff's subject knowledge and skills and their use of assessment. Gaps remain in pupils' basic skills such as spelling and the recall of multiplication tables. Some teaching does not enable pupils to deepen their understanding of more complex subject content. At times, the resources and activity choices that staff use are not well thought through, including for pupils who benefit from bespoke curriculum pathways. As a result, some teaching does not enable pupils to learn the curriculum as intended.

Early years

Needs attention 

Leaders' work to improve the early years is ongoing. For example, there is now a suitable early years curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the implementation of it. Some learning time is not used effectively and lacks purpose. As a result, children do not get the precise support they need to learn well and thrive academically.

The quality of interactions between staff and children does not support children's language development across all 7 areas of learning. Staff do not use their assessments of what children know already to adapt teaching so that it builds on children's varied starting points. As a result, teaching does not extend children's knowledge when they are ready.

Early morning routines ensure that children feel safe. Children enjoy coming to school and attend well. Staff are caring and supportive. This means children learn how to make friends, how to listen in class and take turns. The teaching of early reading and mathematics is effective. Children learn to use their phonics knowledge to write words and sentences accurately. Children's number knowledge is developing.

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

Pupils recognise that the school is improving. For example, the implementation of what the school calls its 'behaviour curriculum' means that staff's expectations of behaviour are higher. Pupils enjoy and value the structured lunchtime activities on offer. They behave well in the dinner hall and show high levels of respect for one another. Staff know pupils well. They provide caring support. Consistent routines ensure that pupils feel safe. Everyone is known as an individual and treated fairly. Pupils make every effort to live out the school's values effectively. For example, pupils show tolerance to each other and typically participate positively in class.

However, pupils' experiences in their academic learning are mixed. Over time, pupils have not been well prepared for secondary school. In the past, pupils did not learn the essential subject content they needed to. Leaders' diligent work to bring about necessary improvements is proving successful. Staff's expectations of what pupils will achieve are on the rise. Pupils are learning more now. Typically, pupils work hard. However, there remain some weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum across subjects and classes. Pupils have gaps in their English and mathematical skills as a result. At times, teaching does not build firmly on what pupils know and can do or pupils are given work that does not deepen their understanding.

Pupils receive high quality pastoral support when they need it. They have the confidence to talk to adults if they are unhappy or have concerns. They are confident that when bullying happens staff sort it out properly.

Pupils benefit from a wide variety of opportunities and experiences beyond the academic, for example through science workshops, residential visits and sporting events such as rugby festivals. Pupils learn to be good team players and to listen to and respect the views of others.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics continues to rise so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Leaders should ensure that all staff have expert subject knowledge in the subjects and phases they teach so that the curriculum in early years, key stages 1 and 2 is implemented consistently well and pupils deepen their understanding of more complex concepts as soon as they are ready.
- Leaders and governors need to ensure that there is stringent oversight of all aspects of the early years curriculum so that adult and child interactions extend children's language development; learning time is fully maximised; and children are well prepared for Year 1.

- Leaders should ensure that staff use assessment information astutely, including in the early years, to ensure that they design activities that build firmly on the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn next.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Sherborne Area School's 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), David Watson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Middleton.

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 executive headteacher, the head of school, the deputy head of school and a range of other staff. They met with the CEO, a trustee and 2 members of the local governance committee and the director of education.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The head of school is Kelly Fletcher.

There is a breakfast club and after-school club.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Maple class provides education for pupils who require a bespoke curriculum. All pupils who attend this class have an education, health and care plan.

Executive Headteacher: Matthew Barge

Lead inspector:

Julie Carrington, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sean Millar, Ofsted Inspector

Stewart Gale, 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

338

Close to 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)

28.40%

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

3.25%

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

17.16%

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	41%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	44%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	40%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	39%	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	62%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	54%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	65%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	67%	73%	Close to average

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	61%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	69%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	54%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	61%	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)	52%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	46%	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	20%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	20%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	21%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20%	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	53%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	40%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	55%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	60%	60%	Close to average

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	46%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	47%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	41%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	53%	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	29%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	27%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	34%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20%	59%	Below

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	20%	68%	-47 pp
2024/25 (final)	20%	69%	-49 pp
2023/24 (final)	21%	67%	-47 pp
2022/23 (final)	20%	66%	-46 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	53%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	40%	81%	-41 pp
2023/24 (final)	55%	80%	-25 pp
2022/23 (final)	60%	78%	-18 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	46%	78%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	47%	78%	-32 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	78%	-36 pp
2022/23 (final)	53%	77%	-24 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	29%	80%	-51 pp
2024/25 (final)	27%	81%	-54 pp
2023/24 (final)	34%	79%	-45 pp
2022/23 (final)	20%	79%	-59 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)	6.0%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
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)	21.5%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	16.3%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	19.4%	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.

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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