

Inspection of Burlescombe Church of England Primary School

Station Road, Burlescombe, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7JH

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Carys Barnett. This school is part of the Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is currently being run by acting co-leaders Rachael Sharpe and Mark Blackman and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sian Jenkins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their village school. Their positive behaviour reflects the school's values of responsibility and respect. Pupils are safe. They value the warm and caring relationships they have with adults at the school. They know there is a trusted adult they can speak to if they have a concern.

There is a renewed sense of ambition of what pupils can achieve with the recent appointment of a substantive headteacher. However, pupils have not learned the important knowledge that they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. This means pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils build their confidence through opportunities the school provides, such as speaking as an 'inspiring speaker' during assembly. They also grow as 'inspiring young leaders' by taking on roles of responsibility such as school councillors. Pupils explain how voting for their school councillor helps them to build an understanding of British values such as democracy.

Pupils appreciate the residential trips to outdoor education centres. They learn new skills such as paddle boarding and orienteering. These trips help pupils to build independence and resilience. The wide range of competitive sporting activities helps to develop their talents and interests.

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

The school has come out of a period of turbulence, which has included long periods without a substantive headteacher. The very recent appointment of the new headteacher has been welcomed by pupils and the school community. The headteacher, with support from newly appointed highly experienced trustees and new members of the 'local school committee', has quickly identified what the school needs to do to improve. However, the school's steps to rectify weaknesses are in their early days and have not had the impact that they need to.

The school has ensured that reading remains central to pupils' learning. The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. The systems and processes that support early reading are rigorous and robust. This means that pupils learn the phonics sounds that they need to know to become confident and fluent readers. Published outcomes show that all pupils in Year 1 passed their phonics screening check.

However, other areas of the curriculum lack appropriate rigour. The school has not set out the essential knowledge that it wants pupils to know and remember. This means that sometimes teachers do not know which knowledge to emphasise and revisit. As a result, pupils are not able to recall what they have learned in the past or to make connections in their learning.

Furthermore, the checks on what pupils know and understand lack precision. Pupils are not provided with effective feedback to help them to improve in their learning. Too often, teachers design tasks that do not take into account what pupils already know and can do. This also means that the work some pupils complete lacks ambition, while other pupils do not have the foundational knowledge to be successful in their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) experience the same weaknesses in the quality of education as their peers. While leaders are quick to identify the needs of pupils with SEND, the targets teachers set for pupils with SEND are not sufficiently precise. This means that pupils with SEND are not routinely supported appropriately and do not achieve as well as they should.

Children in the early years get off to a secure start. The early years environment is a warm and inviting space for pupils to learn. The strong focus on learning reading, writing and mathematics skills from the time they start school is balanced with supporting children to develop a love of the outdoors. This helps children to quickly establish positive attitudes to learning.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils understand how to keep safe online. They learn about beliefs different to their own. Pupils have the opportunity to visit London, the zoo and the local coastline. These visits are linked to what the pupils are learning to help bring the curriculum alive.

Pupils across the school behave well. There is a strong sense of mutual care and respect between pupils of different ages. Older pupils actively model positive behaviour for younger pupils and make a conscious effort to set a good example. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected through high rates of attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that sometimes teachers do not know which knowledge to emphasise and revisit. As a result, pupils do not consistently recall and make connections in their learning. The school should identify the essential knowledge pupils need to remember over time, so teachers know which content to focus on to build pupils' knowledge well.
- The school does not use assessment effectively enough to check what pupils know and remember. Teachers do not design tasks which are ambitious or take into account what pupils already know and can do. This means pupils do not build knowledge securely.

The school needs to ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to check pupils' understanding and design tasks that help pupils to know more over time.

- The targets that teachers set for pupils with SEND are not sufficiently accurate. This means that pupils with SEND do not receive the support that they need to access the curriculum well. The school and trust need to ensure that staff have accurate and informative plans for pupils with SEND so that pupils receive the support that they need in a timely manner.

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	149055
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10378981
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sian Jenkins
Acting co-leaders of the trust	Rachel Sharpe and Mark Blackman
Headteacher	Carys Barnett
Website	www.burlescombe.devon.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up their post in April 2025.
- The school is part of Alumnis Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England School in the Diocese of Exeter. The most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in April 2019.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with teachers, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
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- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the trust leadership team, members of the school's senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, trustees, subject leaders, and members of the local schools committee.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking to parents. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

James Gentile, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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