

Witheridge Church of England Primary Academy

Address: Fore Street, Witheridge, Tiverton, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 8AH

Unique reference number (URN): 144560

Inspection report: 13 January 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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Staff hold high expectations for what all pupils can achieve, regardless of their background or starting point. Leaders work proactively with the local community, offering coffee mornings for parents as well as baby and toddler sessions. These activities help the school to build strong relationships with families and identify any potential barriers to learning at the earliest stage.

With support from the trust's experienced special educational needs team and external agencies, staff are trained to identify pupils' needs swiftly. Staff use a clear, step-by-step approach to identifying and meeting pupils' needs effectively. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive precisely targeted support. Pupils receive timely support that is delivered in a way that ensures they continue to access the school's rich curriculum alongside their peers.

Vulnerable pupils benefit from tailored initiatives such as confidence-building outdoor activities, including surfing, and specialised overnight residential. These opportunities help pupils who are vulnerable or who have social, emotional and mental health needs to develop confidence and resilience.

Leaders have a robust and regularly reviewed plan for supporting disadvantaged pupils. They have accurately identified speech and language as a key barrier for children on entry and provide effective support. The impact of this work is reflected in above-average outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, ensuring they are well prepared for secondary school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The school's provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing is ambitious, well designed and rooted in its rural context. Leaders take effective steps to secure equality of access so that all pupils benefit from the full offer. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life beyond primary school.

A wide range of enrichment opportunities broaden pupils' experiences. These include residential visits that enrich learning through outdoor challenges and a cultural visit to London, where pupils visit the Houses of Parliament. Trust-wide events further promote socialisation. For example, pupils collaborate on moorland navigation challenges, forming friendships that support a smooth transition to secondary school. Trips, visitors and clubs nurture pupils' interests in music, art, crafts and sport. Events such as UK Parliament Week and a partnership with a primary school in Mumbai widen pupils' horizons and deepen their understanding of different countries and cultures.

Playtimes contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing. Pupils can walk a mile and play collaboratively at lunch, building dens, using sandpits and creating swings with tyres. Peer mediators support other pupils to get involved. The range of equipment encourages cooperation and ensures that all pupils engage positively. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities take part fully in the school's wider offer. Additional opportunities, such as Exmoor Discovery Days, help these

pupils build confidence and resilience. Leaders monitor participation closely and take effective action to ensure disadvantaged pupils benefit from the full curriculum and enrichment opportunities.

Pupils have secure knowledge of fundamental British values, the different backgrounds and identities people may have and healthy relationships. They cooperate well and learn to be responsible, respectful and active citizens. Pupil leadership roles enable pupils to make meaningful contributions to the school community. For example, eco councillors lead a soft-plastic recycling initiative that the village has now adopted, while librarians maintain the library and write reviews to guide book choices.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve well overall. Pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 is generally above national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils also attain above-average results in the Year 4 multiplication check. As a result, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Most pupils pass the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, leaders are ambitious for more pupils to secure the reading skills they need by the end of Year 1. They have therefore introduced additional reading support from the moment children start school, recognising that many arrive with barriers in speech and language. Across all key stages, pupils develop their understanding well in a range of subjects. Pupils are expected to apply their English skills, including handwriting and spelling, in all subjects. Established routines, such as personal spelling books, help pupils secure key spellings and apply them with increasing accuracy.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

School and trust leaders closely monitor attendance. Rates of attendance are broadly in line with national averages. For pupils who require adaptations or personalised support, leaders work closely with families and external agencies to ensure attendance remains high.

Pupils generally behave well. Clear routines and rules promote positive behaviour. Where behaviour falls below the school's high expectations, leaders take appropriate and effective action. Behaviour records are detailed and robust, with clear evidence of follow-up actions. School and trust leaders review behaviour information to identify and respond to emerging trends. There have been no incidents of bullying or discriminatory behaviour.

Most staff have high expectations for pupils' conduct, and pupils respond positively. Older pupils, including those in leadership roles, act as respected role models for younger children. Low-level disruption is rare and seldom interrupts learning, although a small number of pupils occasionally need reminders. Staff make appropriate adaptations, such as adjusting tasks or providing additional guidance, which help pupils with special educational

needs and/or disabilities engage fully in their learning. Behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime is a strength of the school. Leaders have planned high-quality play opportunities that encourage cooperation and active play.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate and well-informed view of the quality of education. The curriculum is generally well taught, and most staff have the subject knowledge needed to deepen pupils' understanding. Where teaching is strongest, expectations are high and pupils engage fully in their learning. Leaders have identified where some staff require further support and have provided targeted professional development to strengthen consistency. Processes for checking pupils' progress are in place, but in some lessons practice varies. Where these processes are used well, teachers check precisely what pupils know and remember. In some lessons, however, teachers move on too quickly, leaving misconceptions unaddressed.

This small school has benefited from collaboration across the trust to design an ambitious and broad curriculum. Leaders have identified the key knowledge and skills they want pupils to know and remember. The curriculum reflects and celebrates the local rural environment. For example, pupils learn about farming and agriculture using subject-specific vocabulary. At the same time, pupils develop a secure understanding of subjects and concepts beyond their locality, ensuring they are well prepared for life beyond their village. Pupils who fall behind or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly. Focused, timely support from skilled staff ensures they catch up swiftly and achieve well from their starting points.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of education in the early years. Children with additional needs are identified quickly. Staff make swift adaptations in the classroom, supported by the school's special educational needs coordinator and external agencies when needed. Provision for 2- and 3-year-olds is effective. Staff understand younger children well and provide calm, nurturing routines that help them settle quickly and feel secure. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to understand children's needs.

Children behave well and are keen to learn. Younger children learn to socialise during snack time as they sit and chat with friends. The well-designed curriculum covers all seven areas of learning. Carefully chosen texts help children understand lives different to their own. Revisiting the 'favourite five' books builds a love of reading. Adults extend language effectively, introducing vocabulary such as 'arctic fox' and 'icebergs'. Daily phonics sessions help children learn the sounds and skills needed to begin reading confidently.

Activities are usually appropriate for children's age and stage, and most children are ready for the next steps in their education. When teaching is most effective, they use manipulatives and their fingers to reinforce number facts linked to 3. However, some activities do not support learning as effectively as they could, and the activities provided do not always enable purposeful interactions that develop children's learning.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils in this rural community. They want pupils to value their local surroundings while developing a strong sense of belonging to a wider, global community. Trustees and governors share a clear vision for the school, underpinned by the trust's ethos of 'life, love and learning to the full'. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Robust processes enable them to support and challenge leaders effectively. They ensure funding is used appropriately and benefits all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Governors and trustees are visible at school events and in the community, which builds trust and strengthens relationships.

Staff are proud to work at the school and feel valued. Staff wellbeing is well supported, and leaders are mindful of workload. Professional development is effective for teachers at all stages of their careers and aligns with staff needs, interests and responsibilities. Leaders' routine monitoring of teaching is viewed positively and helps staff to refine their practice. Collaboration across the trust benefits all staff and helps reduce workload, particularly for colleagues working in a small school. The trust invests in leadership development, which contributes to strong staff retention.

Many parents are highly positive about the school and its leadership. They describe the school as 'nurturing' and say their children are happy. They value the school's role in bringing the community together. Parents also appreciate bespoke phonics training, which helps them understand how their children learn to read.

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

Staff greet pupils and their families warmly each morning, helping to create a welcoming start to the school day. School and trust leaders set high expectations for every pupil and foster a strongly inclusive culture. Staff know each pupil's needs well. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those who face barriers to learning, are identified quickly and receive personalised support that helps them achieve well.

Pupils are kept safe. They behave well, and the school has a calm, purposeful atmosphere. Attendance is high, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school and their commitment to learning. There are no incidents of bullying. At lunchtime, pupils socialise happily, and younger children are helped to develop their independence skills, such as using knives and forks correctly. Pupils benefit from the school's rural environment and the wide range of equipment and natural space available. These opportunities promote imaginative play, cooperation and safe risk-taking. Pupils enjoy being active outside and talk confidently about the rich range of outdoor experiences their school provides. They show positive attitudes to their learning and approach new challenges with enthusiasm. They speak enthusiastically about exploring the countryside around their school and taking part in hands-on learning in the natural environment.

Pupils are kind and respectful towards one another. Older pupils take pride in their roles of responsibility and know they set an example for younger pupils. Pupil leaders support others

to embody the school's ethos of encouraging and building each other up.

Children in the early years make a positive start. They form strong relationships and enjoy a broad range of activities with close adult support. Older pupils enjoy their learning and speak confidently about what they know. They have positive attitudes to their schoolwork and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the professional development they need to check pupils' learning effectively and identify and correct misconceptions, so teachers can adjust lessons to help pupils build securely on prior learning.
 - Leaders should improve the quality of activities provided during periods when children explore and play independently so that these consistently support learning and enable staff to extend children's thinking through purposeful interactions.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the TEAM Multi-Academy 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), Ian Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Philippa Sue Wells.

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 CEO, the head of school, the director of education, subject leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator team.

The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking with parents and carers. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has nursery provision for 2- and 3-year-olds.

There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

This school is registered as having a Church of England character. The school's last section 48 inspection took place in May 2019.

Head of School: Lucy Ratcliffe

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Julie Barton, 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 13 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

127

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

120

Well 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)

22.22%

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

2.36%

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

12.60%

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

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	77%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

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	86%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	94%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	88%	73%	Above

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	80%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	88%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	73%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	77%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	88%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	75%	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	62%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
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	77%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	63%	Above
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	69%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	83%	59%	Above
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	62%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	83%	61%	Above
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	62%	68%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	69%	14 pp
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	77%	80%	-3 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
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	69%	78%	-9 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	78%	5 pp
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	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	83%	81%	3 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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 (2 term)	4.7%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.4%	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 (2 term)	9.6%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.7%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	14.9%	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.

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