

High Bickington Church of England Primary Academy

Address: High Bickington, Umberleigh, Devon, EX37 9AY

Unique reference number (URN): 144535

Inspection report: 17 March 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 ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the high rates of attendance. They understand the importance of not missing school. Staff and school leaders closely monitor the attendance of pupils. If rates of attendance begin to decline, the school is quick to work with parents and carers to offer support to help pupils return to school as soon as possible.

Staff have the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour. This culture begins in the early years and continues through to Year 6. The exemplary behaviour of pupils contributes to classrooms being calm and focused. Consequently, pupils give their full attention to what they are learning.

Pupils have an intrinsic motivation to behave well. They do not need reminders from staff about how to behave. 'Everyone treats each other kindly at our school', is how pupils describe behaviour. Pupils consistently show self-discipline and take pride in their work. They show resilience and continually try their best in all that they do. Older pupils act as role models to younger children, which supports all pupils to act in a polite and courteous manner.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Experienced and skilled staff ensure that each interaction with the children is focused and purposeful. There is an ongoing ambition to develop children's vocabulary from an early age. When introducing new words, staff identify opportunities to help children remember what they learn by linking words to playful actions.

The early years curriculum is well planned. There is a rigorous focus on ensuring children develop the skills they need to help them to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. Reading is prioritised from the start through focused phonics teaching. Children also learn appropriate pencil grips from early on. Using their phonics knowledge, children write words and phrases appropriate for their age.

Activities are well matched to the different ages of the children in the early years. Children who are anxious are encouraged and cared for by staff. This supports children to engage positively in their learning.

Parents and carers value the caring start to their child's school journey. They welcome opportunities to attend reading events such as 'book and biscuit'. Parents value the workshops that help them to support their children when reading at home.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that equality of opportunity is embedded in everything that takes place at High Bickington. For example, the school ensures that all pupils have the chance to access the rich off-site activities that are planned. Staff know pupils' needs very well and are quick to identify if a pupil needs support, regardless of when the pupil joins the school. When

necessary, the school works with external partners to provide appropriate support for pupils. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those pupils who are disadvantaged are very well supported. Regular monitoring by the school, trust and governors ensures that the actions taken by staff are having the maximum impact. Ongoing staff training supports and empowers staff to identify targets for pupils that are ambitious and appropriate.

School leaders and those responsible for governance ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Research-based strategies ensure that support for these pupils is appropriate and precise. In some cases, this has led to training staff to use specific strategies effectively, such as pre-teaching. Pupils who benefit from this approach, including some pupils with SEND and some disadvantaged pupils, access the curriculum successfully alongside their peers.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils at High Bickington have a deep sense of right from wrong. They explain that fundamental British values and protecting an individual's right to choose create a peaceful and inclusive society whereby 'everyone can live in peace and work alongside each other'. Trips to Bristol, as part of the history curriculum, support pupils to learn about the slave trade. In addition, trips to London help pupils to learn about communities and cultures that are different from their own. These experiences support pupils to engage in sophisticated discussions about ethical issues. Pupils are proud of where they live. They demonstrate a sense of pride in their own community through activities such as litter picking and singing at local residential homes.

The provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing is designed to be highly inclusive for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of bespoke sporting activities. Pupils who are disadvantaged or those who require extra support receive the help they need. For example, through links with other schools in the trust, school leaders ensure that pupils benefit from building new friendships before they move to secondary school.

Pupils have several opportunities to take on roles of responsibility. The lead boy and girl act as role models for others as well as leading the school council. The school council supports the raising of money for different charities through events such as non-uniform days. Pupils explain that 'charities help raise money for others who are less fortunate than ourselves'. Other pupils are also charged with leading clubs such as chess and running club. These roles help to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. They learn about different careers and develop an understanding of how to manage personal finances.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils at this school achieve well. Most achieve outcomes in national tests that exceed the national average. This is also the case for pupils who are disadvantaged. Pupils talk with clarity about what they are currently learning and what they have learned in the past.

Where pupils have achieved less well in their English grammar, punctuation and spelling test, leaders have put in place measures to ensure pupils secure this knowledge. As a result, pupils can now confidently use and explain the exacting terminology of English grammar. This is also reflected in the quality of pupils' written work across all subjects. Leaders ensure that lessons focused on spelling help pupils develop the essential knowledge they need to access the curriculum. Furthermore, staff's high expectations ensure handwriting is of a high quality and pupils' work is presented to a high standard. This means most pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since the previous inspection, school leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious and builds knowledge progressively over time. Leaders have also taken into account the school's rural setting when designing the curriculum. Topics such as 'farm to fork' celebrate the local farming community, while also helping pupils to learn about farming around the world. Teaching is effective, and staff have the subject knowledge that captures the attention of pupils. When teachers introduce new concepts, they draw on what pupils have learned previously to support them to make connections and build on current learning. For example, in music lessons, pupils learn to play the trombone while referencing technical language, such as crochet, quaver and tempo, from previous lessons.

The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learning is appropriately adapted to ensure they achieve as well as they can.

Teachers identify and address misconceptions in handwriting and spelling. Generally, assessment is used regularly to check pupils' understanding. However, at times the checking of pupils' understanding is not as effective. This means that teaching is not always adapted to reflect what pupils know. As a result, some pupils continue in their learning with gaps in their knowledge and some pupils complete work that is not always as ambitious as it could be.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

School and trust leaders, along with those responsible for governance, know their school well. They have high expectations for what pupils should achieve. They have identified and prioritised the areas for development to support pupils to achieve as well as they can. The decisions that leaders make are in the best interests of pupils, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel highly supported and are committed to the school and the community. They value the way in which everyone works as part of a close-knit team. Staff appreciate the work the trust has done to reduce their workload, which supports them to focus on teaching. For example, teachers benefit from working and planning with other teachers across the trust. This helps them to share best practice and develop the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their roles effectively.

Governors and trustees are highly involved in school life. They work alongside curriculum leaders to gain a first-hand understanding of the impact of the curriculum. Trust leaders provide an effective level of support and challenge to school leaders.

Parents appreciate the 'open-door culture' of the school. Parental engagement has strengthened further through recent initiatives such as improvements to communications and opportunities to attend curriculum presentations.

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

The school's vision of 'Let your light shine' is lived out daily by the pupils at High Bickington Church of England Primary Academy. Expectations for what pupils can achieve are high. The atmosphere in the playground, as pupils arrive at school on their bikes and scooters, is calm and welcoming. As pupils move into their classrooms, they remain calm but swiftly focus their attention on purposeful activities that support them in their learning. By the end of Year 6, many pupils achieve highly in national curriculum tests.

The school is at the heart of the community. Staff know pupils well. Staff swiftly remove any barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing. Pupils are safe and say they feel safe. They know that if they had any concerns, they could speak to a member of staff. They know they would be supported.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. They strive to do their absolute best. Pupils across the school behave extremely well. They are polite and courteous to visitors as well as to each other. Older pupils engage in conversation with visitors in a confident and mature manner.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and talents. For example, pupils learn to play different musical instruments, and they then perform at a proms event at a local theatre. Pupils also participate in activities to build their confidence and resilience, such as rock climbing and gymnastics events.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. They learn how relationships change over time. They also learn to keep themselves safe when they are online. Parents are highly positive about their children's experience at school. They say that the school and staff are nurturing and it is a place where children fall in love with learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that teachers' use of assessment to check what pupils already know, including through questioning, enables them to make changes to their teaching as necessary so that pupils achieve very well.
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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, Ian Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Philippa Sue Wells.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Stephen Graham.

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 head of school, 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 the online survey, 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 two- and three-year-olds.

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

This school is registered as having a Church of England character. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2024.

Headteacher: Rob Norton

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Cameron Lancaster, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

90

Well 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

70

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)

7.59%

Well 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

1.11%

Below 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

15.56%

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

Below 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	73%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	59%	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	82%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	92%	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	86%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	88%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	83%	71%	Above

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	84%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	73%	Above

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		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24		46%	
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		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24		62%	
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		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24		58%	
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		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24		59%	
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		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24		67%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		80%	

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24		78%	
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		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24		79%	
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)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.7%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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)	13.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.4%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	13.9%	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.

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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