

# Buckland Newton Church of England Primary School

**Address:** Buckland Newton, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 7BY

**Unique reference number (URN):** 144413

## Inspection report: 10 February 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

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve particularly well in reading and mathematics. This can be seen in published outcomes that are above national averages. As such, pupils gain a secure understanding of what they read. Pupils recall number facts securely and are able to solve complex mathematical problems effectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make substantial progress from their starting points.

Pupils typically learn their phonics well and read accurately. Changes to teaching approaches in writing mean that pupils' writing across the school has improved. Most pupils spell accurately and use descriptive language effectively. However, at times, a minority of pupils do not learn more complex concepts in writing as soon as they are ready. Nonetheless, this does not impact on pupils' preparedness for secondary school. The oldest pupils achieve consistently well. For example, they use complex sentences and ambitious vocabulary with confidence in their sustained writing.

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders' stringent and consistent systems to monitor pupils' attendance are highly effective. The school works with pupils, families and external agencies when needed with positive impact. This ensures that pupils who have been persistently absent in the past now usually attend well. Typically, high rates of attendance overall are being sustained, including for those who are disadvantaged.

Pupils understand and apply the rules of 'ready, respectful, safe'. Pupils get off to a calm start to each day and behave well. Staff usually model high expectations of behaviour and conduct in lessons. This means that pupils grow in maturity and show a positive work ethic. However, occasionally, when teaching does not build precisely on what pupils know already, a minority of pupils' attention can wander in lessons. This reduces the amount of practice that pupils have to deepen their understanding of subject content.

Pupils know not to discriminate. Staff work in unison to ensure that they get to the root cause of any behaviour incidents. As a result, there are few recurrences. When pupils find it difficult to manage their emotions, staff provide caring support and put relevant and purposeful adjustments in place.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is ambitious and well sequenced. It prepares pupils well for their next stage of education. Staff have sound subject knowledge. This ensures that they deliver the curriculum effectively. On the whole, pupils learn the essential knowledge they need through the curriculum. For example, pupils become fluent in their multiplication tables and apply their mathematical knowledge to other curriculum areas, such as science investigations.

Leaders have clear expectations about what teachers should teach and when. They carefully consider subject content for pupils of different ages in mixed-age classes. Staff use this information to ensure that pupils build their subject knowledge over time across a range of subjects. Changes to the teaching of early reading mean that pupils are securing their phonics knowledge more quickly. Pupils learn to read accurately. Pupils who have struggled in the past receive tailored and effective support to catch up. Typically, staff check what pupils know and understand. However, there are times when staff do not use this information precisely. This means that a small minority of pupils do not get enough practice to deepen their understanding or routinely explore the most complex subject content. Leaders know this, and recent work to address it is taking hold.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Staff in pre-school and Reception know the children very well. Staff are quick to identify any additional needs that children have and use this information to provide bespoke teaching. This ensures that any gaps in children's knowledge, their physical development and personal, social and emotional development are addressed head-on. Parents and carers appreciate how staff keep them informed about this. Children progress well from their varied starting points across the early years.

In pre-school, staff use their expert knowledge to deliver the ambitious curriculum. Children learn important skills, such as listening, taking turns, holding a knife and fork and being toilet trained. The deliberate focus on developing children's communication and language ensures that children learn their speech sounds, gain a love of stories and expand their vocabulary. This builds their confidence and readiness for the Reception Year.

Children are well prepared for Year 1. Staff implement the curriculum effectively across all 7 areas of learning in Reception. Children learn their phonics knowledge and the foundations of mathematics successfully. However, on occasions, activity choices or the quality of staff's interactions do not deepen children's understanding consistently well. While teaching typically meets children's needs, a minority of children do not expand their vocabulary as extensively as they could.

## Inclusion

Expected standard 

Right from the start, leaders make decisions that place pupils' needs right at the centre. For example, they ensure that ongoing staff training provides secure subject knowledge to deliver bespoke learning approaches. The school works closely with pupils, families and external agencies to ensure that pupils' ongoing social, emotional and academic needs are continually met. Staff quickly identify and assess the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Typically staff use this information to adapt teaching and address barriers to learning effectively. For example, they routinely use a range of resources, such as visual prompts and sensory resources, to ensure that pupils can access learning across the curriculum.

The school uses its additional funding appropriately. This ensures that when pupils have gaps in their knowledge they receive timely interventions. Pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged, or known to social care, learn well through the curriculum as a result. Leaders' work to analyse the impact of short-term interventions is developing. Increasingly,

this ensures that pupils emerging and changing needs are considered and acted upon in a timely way. Leaders commission alternative provision when needed and keep a clear oversight of the education pupils receive who attend.

## **Leadership and governance**

**Expected standard** 

Leaders, including the local governing committee, understand the school's strengths and aspects that require further refinement. Leaders and trust staff make regular checks on curriculum and teaching. This ensures that they identify any improvement priorities accurately. Leaders act in the best interest of pupils when making whole school decisions. For example, a schoolwide focus has improved the teaching of phonics successfully. Leaders and governors ensure that staff implement the school's expectations and policies. This can be seen in the approach to promoting successful relationships and pupils' positive behaviour. Leaders are highly reflective and use up-to-date research when making any changes to the school's work. This ensures that over time staff make a consistently positive contribution to supporting pupils' individual needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged or known to social care.

The local governing committee fulfil their statutory duties well. For example, they have clear oversight of the provision for pupils with SEND and safeguarding arrangements in the school.

Leaders use any support they receive from the trust effectively, for instance, to keep staff updated in recent approaches to teach writing. Leaders deliver a detailed professional development programme. This ensures that staff typically have secure subject knowledge in the subjects they teach. The trust and school consider staff's workload and wellbeing carefully. Staff are proud to work at the school. Notably, leaders build positive and effective relationships with parents and carers and the local community.

## **Personal development and wellbeing**

**Expected standard** 

The personal development programme is ambitious, well sequenced and implemented effectively. The detailed focus on supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing shines through many aspects of the school's work. This ensures that pupils develop a strong sense of self. Over time, they become well-rounded individuals who are eager to explore what life is like beyond school. The personal development programme teaches pupils to be tolerant and treat others fairly. They engage in discussions and debates about right and wrong. For instance, they learn about civil rights in Britain and why discrimination is wrong. They gain detailed knowledge of major world religions. This enables them to develop the ability to compare and contrast key concepts such as prayer across religions.

The relationships and sex and health education curriculum includes all the necessary knowledge for pupils to learn. Pupils have a detailed understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, and they know the importance of healthy lifestyles and maintaining positive relationships. Pupils learn about puberty and consent. The school encourages pupils to serve the community and beyond, for example, through contributing to local foodbanks and raising money for charity through 'house' groups.

There is an extensive range of activities to broaden pupils' horizons and teach them important life skills, such as planning events, teamwork and meeting deadlines. The recent 'Panto in a day', the school's art exhibitions in the community and intraschool rugby tournaments are just a few examples.

Staff know all pupils well. They provide a range of pastoral support to pupils who need it. This ensures that pupil's emotional and academic needs are met well, including for disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care. The school tracks pupils' participation in activities beyond the academic and uses additional funding to ensure that everyone has full access to the personal development programme.

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

Pupils are proud to belong to the Buckland Newton family. Pupils benefit from well-established morning routines. This makes pupils feel safe. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education socially, emotionally and academically. Everyone is supported as an individual. This starts in Nursery. Pupils respond to the school's high expectations. Over time pupils become confident in who they are as a result. They attend school regularly, are polite and typically behave well at social times and in class. If bullying happens, pupils have confidence that staff will resolve issues quickly. Pupils learn the well-sequenced curriculum effectively. Any gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed effectively. For example, when becoming fluent in learning number facts and applying important subject content across curriculum subjects. This ensures that over time pupils gain the necessary knowledge they need for secondary school.

Pupils live out the school's values each day. They show respect and gain a clear sense of service and social responsibility through their work with the local community. Pupils take an active part in running the school as 'leading light' ambassadors, eco and lunchtime monitors. They contribute to important decision-making, for example, in strengthening the games on offer at lunchtimes. These varied opportunities enable pupils to work to deadlines, develop resilience and maturity and make a positive difference to school life. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective thinkers. For example, they are expected to explore 'big questions', and this helps them understand important concepts such as diversity and gain different perspectives on the world.

A wealth of activities develop pupils' interests and talents beyond the academic. 'Nature walks', outdoor learning and residential visits are highlights for many. Pupils take pride when representing the school in sporting and musical events. The many clubs on offer are open to everyone.

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## **Next steps**

- Leaders should ensure that teaching deepens pupils' understanding when they are ready so that more pupils learn detailed knowledge across the curriculum.

- Leaders should ensure that staff in the early years maximise the opportunities they have to engage children in high-quality interactions that develop and extend their knowledge and vocabulary.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of Sherborne Areas 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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a range of other staff. They met with the CEO, a trustee and 4 members of the local governance committee. Inspectors also met with 3 central trust staff.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

There is a breakfast and after-school club.

There is a Nursery on site that admits children from aged 2 years.

The school makes use of two unregistered alternative provisions.

Phillip Sales : Headteacher

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### Lead inspector:

Julie Carrington, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspector:

Richard Vaughan, 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 10 February 2026

# School and pupil context

## Total pupils

**109**

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

**105**

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)

**14.74%**

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

**4.59%**

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**

**25.69%**

Well above 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 | 69%         | 61%              | Above                          |

| Year                     | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b> | 71%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>   | 79%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>   | 57%         | 60%              | Close to average               |

### **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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 91%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 88%         | 75%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 93%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 93%         | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 69%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 71%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 79%         | 72%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 57%         | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 98%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 100%        | 74%              | Above                          |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | 93%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 43%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 47%              | S                              |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 86%         | 62%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | 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 | 43%         | 59%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 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 | 86%         | 60%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 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 | 43%         | 68%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 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 | 86%         | 80%                              | 6 pp                    |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 43%         | 78%                              | -35 pp                  |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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 |
|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 86%         | 80%                              | 6 pp                    |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | 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) | 4.2%        | 5.2%             | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 4.7%        | 5.5%             | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 5.5%        | 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) | 7.5%        | 13.3%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 9.4%        | 14.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 6.7%        | 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.

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