

Sherborne Primary School

Address: Harbour Way, DT9 4AJ

Unique reference number (URN): 144417

Inspection report: 6 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school and trust have high expectations for attendance. Leaders have worked diligently and effectively to raise overall attendance and reduce persistent absence. The school works in partnership with families and other professionals. Together, they identify individual pupils' barriers to attendance and plan appropriate support. Leaders continue to develop their understanding of patterns of attendance across the school. They are ambitious to improve attendance further, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have created a positive culture of behaviour within the school. This is built on the shared understanding that everyone plays a part in making the Sherborne Primary community a kind and respectful place. Bullying and unkind behaviour are never tolerated. The school is clear about how it expects pupils to behave, particularly during social times. Staff celebrate when pupils behave well. Consequently, the school is calm. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and adults. Where pupils need additional help to change their behaviour, leaders act swiftly and effectively. This has led to a substantial reduction in the number of suspensions. The school is continuing to raise expectations for pupils' dedication to their learning. They do this through rewards and celebration events. Pupils are proud to achieve this recognition.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders work closely with families to ensure that children in the early years settle well into the routines of school life. Children quickly form trusting relationships with staff and enjoy coming to school. They learn to become increasingly independent with tasks such as tidying away equipment or putting on aprons for messy activities. Staff have high expectations for behaviour and help children to learn how to work collaboratively with others. Staff work alongside other professionals to identify any additional needs and support that children require. This work continues as pupils transition successfully into Year 1.

Leaders have designed the curriculum to help children develop social skills as well as learn important knowledge, such as number facts. For example, counting within games has been introduced. Adults typically engage well with children to develop their vocabulary and explore their interests. Children begin to learn to read accurately as soon as they start at the school. Shared class stories both help to develop a love of reading and reinforce what children have been learning about during the term. Leaders are rightly now focused on further developing children's writing to provide a solid foundation for their future learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed an inclusive culture with a clear commitment for all pupils to achieve, belong and thrive. They use additional funding appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, additional adults in the early years help to ensure children develop their language and communication skills. The school works extensively with other organisations to provide additional support for pupils with other barriers to

learning, such as caring responsibilities. The alternative provision used by the school has been carefully selected to be in the best interests of pupils. Of note is the highly effective work that the school does to welcome families in the armed forces into the school community.

Staff identify the individual educational needs of pupils effectively when they join the school. They work with families to plan the additional support that will help to address the barriers to each pupil's learning, such as through phonics intervention or play therapy. However, at times, the individual targets for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not sufficiently precise to enable leaders to fully evaluate the positive impact of the interventions for these pupils. In addition, the weaknesses within teaching mean that pupils with SEND and other barriers to learning are not consistently supported to achieve as well as they should.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff at the school and trust share the vision that all pupils should achieve, have a sense of belonging and feel cared for. They act in the best interests of pupils to reduce any barriers to their wellbeing. Consequently, leaders have prioritised safeguarding, inclusion and personal development. Leaders understand the need to improve the quality of teaching and achievement to reduce barriers to learning and ensure that all pupils achieve well. They have begun work to address these areas. Leaders are considerate of the workload and wellbeing of staff when planning for changes and improvements.

The school, with the support of the trust, has provided staff with professional learning that helps to develop their expertise. For example, teachers had a comprehensive introduction to the new curriculum. Staff particularly appreciated the training and support from leaders during the introduction of the new relational behaviour policy. This has contributed to the reduction in disrupted learning.

Trustees and governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They are increasingly providing challenge to school and trust leaders to secure long-term sustainable improvements to the school. This is evident within their oversight of attendance and behaviour. However, they do not have the same robust understanding of how leaders are securing improvements in teaching and achievement. This is restricting their ability to both support and challenge leaders on the impact of this work. For example, the plans to improve the quality of pupils' writing are not being as effectively monitored as they need to be to ensure they are having the rapid, positive impact that leaders intend.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's values highlight the importance given to developing the individual character of pupils and preparing them for adult life. Pupils talk enthusiastically about where they have been and are curious and brave to try new things. Staff work determinedly to support pupils with barriers to their learning or wellbeing to take part in the full life of the school. Pupils new to the school talk warmly about how they were welcomed, both by staff and other pupils.

The school has recently revised its curriculum to better support pupils' personal and social development. The new curriculum is well planned so that pupils learn to keep themselves safe and well. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships, mental health and how to manage online risks in an age-appropriate way. However, this improvement work is recent and, therefore, some older pupils have gaps in what they have learned before. This means that they are not as confident with recalling their learning as the younger pupils.

Pupils show respectful views towards others and value the opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions. As a result of this teaching, pupils are clear that there is no place for bullying in their school. How to be a positive citizen is reinforced by the school through different activities, such as random acts of kindness day. A range of clubs and extra-curricular opportunities develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils of all ages enjoy activities such as gardening, choir and crafts. Older pupils act as positive role models to younger pupils. Pupils are proud to represent the school in sporting competitions. The drama performances to the local community help to build pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils recognise that the school 'helps them to mature'.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Pupils are not as well prepared for their next stage of education as they should be, particularly those pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils learn to read confidently and accurately. However, the quality of their written work across the curriculum and their mathematical understanding are not of the same standard. This is reflected in both the recent published outcomes and the current work produced by pupils.

Leaders are taking steps to ensure that pupils are improving the quality of their handwriting and accuracy of punctuation. Equally, improvements to the mathematics and wider curriculum have raised expectations for pupils, particularly within the early years. Nevertheless, gaps in what pupils know and can do remain and this hinders how successfully they can move to more challenging content. Therefore, there continues to be an impact on pupil achievement, particularly for the oldest pupils.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

The quality of teaching across the curriculum and phases is not consistently of the high standard that leaders intend. At times, the classroom activities are not helping pupils to practise their learning so that they can remember knowledge over time. For example, sufficient opportunities for pupils to rehearse numbers in different contexts are not provided. Staff do not check accurately what pupils know and can do. As a result, they do not adapt their teaching effectively to help correct pupils' misconceptions or address gaps in their knowledge and understanding. For example, by not ensuring pupils have the essential skill of holding a pencil correctly, they are unable to successfully form letters and write clearly.

This means that teaching is also not meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with barriers to learning as well as it should.

Leaders have adopted an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. They have set out what pupils should know for each subject. The sequencing of topics supports pupils to build on their learning as they move to the next stage of their education. Staff have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum. Subject leaders review the curriculum, making improvements when needed. For example, the changes to the phonics curriculum mean that it is now better matched to the needs of pupils.

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

Pupils at Sherborne Primary enjoy being part of this caring community. They feel they belong and know they are safe. Pupils are known well as individuals and their barriers to learning are quickly identified. Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. However, pupils are not learning and remembering the curriculum as well as they should. The quality of pupils' written work and their depth of mathematical understanding are not as high as their reading accuracy and fluency. The school's published outcomes reflect this. The school does not identify weaknesses in pupils' handwriting quickly. This means pupils are not supported to rapidly improve. While leaders' actions have led to improvements for the youngest children, the oldest pupils are still not well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils behave well and appreciate that they can learn without disruption. They trust adults with any worries. On the rare occasion bullying happens, pupils confidently report this so incidents are resolved very quickly. Pupils know why it is important to attend school regularly and typically do so. When pupils and families need additional help to overcome barriers to attendance, the school pastoral team is ready to support. This close partnership working with families is a strength of the school.

The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for adult life. The school encourages pupils to be ambitious for their future through careers events. Pupils understand their role as citizens of the school and are keen to take on additional responsibilities. The student council, eco-committee and the Sherbean Café are some of the ways the pupils develop leadership skills. A range of extra-curricular activities, such as theatre trips, sport and music, help pupils to discover their talents and interests. Pupils learn about the importance of respect and caring for others through inter-generational community projects. This brings the personal development programme to life for pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that highly effective teaching is embedded across the school so that all groups of pupils securely know and remember the intended learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use formative assessment to swiftly identify and address gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils achieve well and are prepared for their next stage in education.
 - Leaders should ensure that their strategy to improve pupils' transcription and punctuation is having the intended impact on improving the quality of pupils' written work, particularly for those who are disadvantaged.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Sherborne Area Schools' Trust (SAST), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Watson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Middleton.

Inspectors carried out the 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 school senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff, trust executive leaders, local governors and a representative of the trust board.

The school makes use of 3 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

There is a breakfast and after-school club led by the school for pupils who attend the school.

Head of school : Felicity Griffiths

Lead inspector:

Sara Berry, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lizzy Meadows, Ofsted Inspector

Sean Millar, 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 6 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

319

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

330

Close to 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)

21.00%

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

3.45%

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

10.34%

Below 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	50%	61%	Below
2024/25	47%	62%	Below
2023/24	47%	61%	Below
2022/23	55%	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
Latest 3 year average	70%	74%	Close to average
2024/25	69%	75%	Below
2023/24	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23	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	69%	72%	Close to average
2024/25	71%	72%	Close to average
2023/24	69%	72%	Close to average
2022/23	67%	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	61%	73%	Below
2024/25	55%	74%	Below
2023/24	61%	73%	Below
2022/23	67%	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	35%	46%	Below
2024/25	33%	47%	Below
2023/24	13%	46%	Below
2022/23	56%	44%	Close to average

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	51%	62%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25	44%	63%	Below
2023/24	40%	62%	Below
2022/23	69%	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	55%	59%	Close to average
2024/25	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24	47%	58%	Close to average
2022/23	63%	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	51%	60%	Below
2024/25	44%	61%	Below
2023/24	47%	59%	Below
2022/23	63%	59%	Close to average

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	35%	68%	-33 pp
2024/25	33%	69%	-36 pp
2023/24	13%	67%	-54 pp
2022/23	56%	66%	-10 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	51%	80%	-29 pp
2024/25	44%	81%	-36 pp
2023/24	40%	80%	-40 pp
2022/23	69%	78%	-10 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	55%	78%	-23 pp
2024/25	56%	78%	-23 pp
2023/24	47%	78%	-31 pp
2022/23	63%	77%	-15 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	51%	80%	-29 pp
2024/25	44%	81%	-36 pp
2023/24	47%	79%	-33 pp
2022/23	63%	79%	-17 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 (2 terms)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24	6.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23	6.0%	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 terms)	15.9%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24	16.5%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23	18.4%	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.

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