

The Beacon Church of England (VA) Primary School

Address: 1 Beacon Place, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 2SR

Unique reference number (URN): 113430

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.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils generally behave well. They follow the agreed school routines that staff take the time to help pupils understand. For example, leaders ensure that at the start of each year, staff are supported to build positive relationships with pupils and provide reminders about the school routines and expectations. On some occasions, behaviour wanes for a small number of pupils. This is often when the curriculum is less well matched to what pupils are capable of. The school's work to support pupils who may have more challenging behaviour has been effective. It has helped to reduce the number of suspensions over time. Well-trained staff in the 'nest' also help to meet pupils' social and emotional needs.

Pupils understand what bullying means and most pupils feel that any concerns get sorted out quickly. A small number of pupils, parents and carers feel that matters can occasionally take too long to resolve.

Leaders have worked on promoting a sense of belonging for pupils. This has had a positive impact on attendance. Leaders monitor the attendance of pupils. They work closely with families and external agencies to provide the appropriate support to pupils and families who may need it. As a result, attendance rates are broadly in line with the national average, including for those pupils who are disadvantaged.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school provides a wide range of opportunities to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Leaders consider carefully the adaptations needed to ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's wider offer, including those who are disadvantaged. They track carefully the impact on pupils, such as on their attendance and wellbeing.

Through the personal, social, health and education curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They understand the importance of keeping themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, they have a secure understanding of different cultures.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' character. Staff teach pupils how to care for others, such as raising money for local charities and donating food to those who need it. Pupils are proud of the difference they make. For example, pupils talk confidently about a global project working with other coastal schools to raise awareness of sea sewage.

Pupils enjoy improving their school and wider community, such as through local beach cleans.

Pupils talk proudly about the enriching activities they experience, such as the school choir and orchestra. Pupils take great pride in travelling across Devon to perform to a range of audiences, including at the Devon County Show. To develop talents and interests further, pupils attend a variety of clubs and sporting events. The school promotes pupils' confidence through their annual school performances, such as the pantomime.

Pupils and families value the pastoral support in place to help them. The school provides a range of events to help parents and carers, such as workshops on managing anxiety and promoting resilience.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

As they progress through the school, many pupils are not as ready for their next stage of education as they should be. Pupils do not consistently learn the essential knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Too many pupils do not receive sufficiently effective practice to secure and apply the sounds they have been taught. Staff do not consistently use precise phonics approaches, and some pupils are not secure in using their phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words fluently.

Some younger pupils are not secure in the phonics knowledge they need to read well. This includes pupils who have joined the school at different points, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with additional needs. Weaknesses in the early years curriculum and in the implementation of phonics mean that some pupils do not receive enough structured practice to help them develop secure early reading knowledge. When pupils fall behind, the support they receive is not consistently precise or effective enough to help them catch up quickly.

As a result, some pupils struggle to decode and blend unfamiliar words with confidence. This limits how well they read and affects how successfully they access the wider curriculum. Published outcomes in the phonics screening check are low, but this is not considered in isolation. Gaps in phonics, spelling, handwriting and sentence construction are not being addressed consistently.

Achievement is improving in some areas, including for some pupils and in some subjects. However, this improvement is not consistent across the school. Too many pupils still have gaps in foundational knowledge, which affects how well they learn across the curriculum and how well prepared they are for their next stage.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders have established a broad and balanced curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. The curriculum sets out the order in which pupils should learn the knowledge and skills they

need across subjects. This makes it clear for teachers to know what to teach and when.

Leaders have some understanding of how well the curriculum is taught. This has led to some recent improvements. For example, to support the teaching of mathematics, leaders have recently introduced a clear sequence of learning to develop pupils' mathematical fluency. Actions such as these to improve the curriculum are in the early stages. It is too soon to see their impact.

The school has provided professional training for staff to support the teaching of the curriculum. Recent training has also focused on ways to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access their learning. However, the impact of this has been limited. Staff do not implement the curriculum consistently well, particularly in reading and writing. Checks on what pupils know do not routinely lead to precise adaptations or support. As a result, some pupils' misconceptions and gaps in foundational knowledge persist.

The checks that staff make on how well pupils are building their knowledge do not consistently lead to adaptations to learning. This prevents pupils, including those with additional vulnerabilities, from successfully learning what the school intends. It hampers the progress that these pupils are making.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

There is variability in how well pupils receive the personalised support they need. For example, leaders do not always identify the needs for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly or accurately. The school does not have sufficient oversight of the support provided to help these pupils close gaps in their knowledge. Training provided by the school has not led to pupils with SEND routinely benefiting from sharply focused support. Leaders have set out expectations for adaptive teaching through a range of strategies. In some cases, these adaptations help pupils with SEND access learning successfully. However, this is not consistent. Some pupils' targets and classroom support are not precise enough to help them close gaps in knowledge and learn the curriculum as well as they could.

Leaders identify and support some pupils' needs effectively, particularly pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. However, they do not identify all pupils' barriers to learning with enough precision, especially where pupils have cognition and learning needs or significant gaps in foundational knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not receive the precise support they need to learn the curriculum well.

Leaders ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged, including pupils with SEND, are included in all aspects of school life. Appropriate alternative provision is in place and is commissioned by the local authority.

Urgent improvement ●

Early years

Urgent improvement ●

Children benefit from warm, caring relationships with adults. Staff know children well and use conversation and play to support their communication and language. Children respond positively to adults' encouragement and enjoy sharing their ideas. The school also shares information about children's learning with parents, which helps to promote positive partnership working.

However, leaders have not ensured that the early years curriculum is sufficiently ambitious, coherent or well sequenced from the 2-year-olds' provision through to Reception. Staff do not have a clear-enough understanding of the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that children should learn over time. They are not precise enough about what children need to learn next, or how activities should build securely on what children already know. Consequently, too much learning is left to chance. Some children do not develop the foundational knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for Year 1.

Staff do not use assessment well enough to identify what children know, understand and can do. Checks are not precise or purposeful enough to identify gaps in learning or to adapt provision effectively. As a result, some children's needs are not addressed quickly enough. For example, many children entering key stage 1 require additional support to develop the fine motor skills needed for writing.

Children enjoy listening to stories, and this helps to foster an interest in books and language. However, children do not receive the support they need to learn to read well. They have too few opportunities to practise phonics, and staff do not check carefully enough whether children are keeping up with the reading programme. As a result, some children enter key stage 1 with significant gaps in early reading.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

Leaders have faced significant challenges, including staff absence, leader ill health and a changing pupil profile. However, they have not acted with enough urgency or precision to secure the necessary improvements. Leaders have identified some of the right priorities, but their actions have not improved key weaknesses quickly enough, particularly in early years, foundational knowledge and the consistency of teaching. Some school improvement decisions have not secured the necessary improvements quickly enough, particularly in early years, phonics, writing and the precision of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, some pupils have not benefited from consistently effective provision.

Governors are committed to the school and provide support and challenge through meetings and monitoring activity. However, they do not have a precise-enough understanding of the school's effectiveness, including the pace and impact of improvement work. The information they receive and the checks they make do not enable them to hold leaders to account with enough rigour for securing rapid improvement, particularly in early years, foundational knowledge and pupils' achievement.

Staff speak positively about the support for their workload and wellbeing. Leaders provide professional training to staff, which is intended to improve the teaching of the curriculum. However, they do not review the impact of this training or evaluate whether staff consistently follow the school's systems, its vision or the set curriculum. Because leaders do not check this with enough rigour, the variable standards that exist have led to pupils not achieving as well as they should.

Most parents and carers are supportive of the school and value the positive impact on their child's wellbeing. A significant minority of parents have less positive views.

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

Leaders have not prioritised the necessary improvements in this school. They have not acted with sufficient urgency to address long-standing weaknesses. Appropriate action has not been taken to improve how well pupils learn across subjects. This is particularly the case in the early years, where children get off to a weak start to their education. Consequently, many younger children are not prepared for key stage 1.

There is variation in the extent to which older pupils are supported to read well, to write fluently and to use and apply mathematics. This is of particular detriment to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although leaders have taken some action to improve the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2, this is at an early stage of development. Consequently, too many pupils continue to achieve less well than they should.

Despite these weaknesses, pupils enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes to their learning. They speak proudly of being part of the 'one big Beacon family'. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and nurturing. The school's vision, 'living life in all its fullness', is understood by pupils. Pupils treat others with kindness. Pupils value their friendships and know the importance of ensuring everyone is included. They treat each other with respect. Pupils consider bullying to take place rarely and know that adults will deal with it quickly if it does occur. This helps them to feel safe.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development and wellbeing, which are at the heart of the school. A range of trips and experiences enrich the curriculum, such as visits to local caves to support geographical learning. Pupils appreciate the leadership roles available to them. These include wellbeing ambassadors, who look after the youngest children. Pupils understand the school's wider vision of being a 'good shepherd'. This encourages everyone in the school community to care for and support one another.

Next steps

- Leaders must identify, with precision, the key weaknesses that continue to limit the school's effectiveness, particularly in the early years. Leaders and governors should then regularly check the impact of their actions to ensure that improvement work leads to rapid and sustainable change.

- Leaders must improve the quality of the early years to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of children across the age range, taking into consideration their different starting points. Leaders must check that this is implemented effectively so that children are able to secure knowledge across all areas of learning to be well prepared for their next stage.
 - Leaders must strengthen how they identify the most significant needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They must ensure pupils with SEND receive precise, well-matched support, including in the early years. Leaders should then check, with rigour, that this support enables them to learn the curriculum successfully so that they achieve well.
 - Leaders must develop staff's expertise and subject knowledge so they accurately check how well pupils are learning the curriculum and adapt future teaching to build on what pupils know and can do.
 - Leaders should make sure pupils are given the support they need to secure accuracy and fluency in reading and writing, checking with precision that support leads to better achievement so that pupils are prepared for their next stage.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Caroline Walshaw.

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 headteacher, senior leaders, staff and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also met with governors, including the chair of governors.

Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. They considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school also, under the same registration, has a governor-led nursery provision that takes children from 2 years old. There are currently 10 children on the pre-school roll.

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school is part of the Diocese of Exeter. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school was carried out in July 2024.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

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

Headteacher: Anne Billington

Lead inspector:

Esther Best, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Matt Middlemore, Ofsted Inspector

Tracy Hannon, 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

166

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

210

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)

18.67%

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

1.81%

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

30.12%

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

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	53%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	68%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	60%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	67%	74%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	78%	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	67%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	83%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	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
Latest 3 year average	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	61%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	74%	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	28%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	29%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	0%	44%	Below

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	61%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	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	33%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	29%	58%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	17%	58%	Below

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	50%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	33%	59%	Below

‘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	28%	68%	-40 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	29%	67%	-39 pp
2022/23 (final)	0%	66%	-66 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	61%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 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	33%	78%	-44 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	29%	78%	-49 pp
2022/23 (final)	17%	77%	-61 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	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	57%	79%	-22 pp
2022/23 (final)	33%	79%	-46 pp

‘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)	5.5%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.3%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.8%	5.9%	Above

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)	13.3%	13.3%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.6%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	18.2%	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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright