

Wilcombe Primary School

Address: Lazenby Road, Wilcombe, Tiverton, Devon, EX16 4AL

Unique reference number (URN): 137659

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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Following the rapid increase in the number of pupils with SEND joining the school, leaders have skilfully developed a targeted provision for those pupils with the highest level of need. On entry, pupils are assessed quickly and there are robust systems that ensure pupils' needs are identified precisely. This means pupils with SEND complete work and access a curriculum that is closely matched to what they can do. As a result, pupils with SEND make a strong start at Wilcombe Primary School.

Staff understand the needs of pupils with SEND well and build positive relationships with them. As a result, these pupils feel safe and secure, which encourages them to try their best. Ongoing checks on how well pupils are progressing inform leaders' response to reviewing and adapting the support that pupils receive. When required, leaders work with external professionals to secure specialist support for pupils who need it. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well from their starting points.

Leaders proactively identify potential barriers that disadvantaged pupils may face. Additional funding is allocated to support pupils in ways that closely reflect their needs. For example, leaders have introduced swimming lessons for pupils in key stage 1 to ensure pupils develop a positive and healthy relationship with water and swimming.

Expected standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Leaders are relentless and successful in their work to secure high rates of attendance. Pupils' attendance is around the national average. Leaders help pupils to understand the importance of attending school regularly. They are quick to identify when attendance rates fall below where they should be. When this happens, leaders work with families to understand the barriers they face, put appropriate support in place and ensure they have a secure understanding of the importance of attendance. When attendance improves, leaders celebrate this success. For example, they send letters to parents and carers recognising their child's improvements.

The school is calm and pupils behave well. Staff have high expectations for how pupils should behave. The warm and respectful relationships that pupils and staff share help pupils to meet these expectations. Pupils are generally keen to participate in lessons and socialise well at playtime. Incidents of bullying are rare, and when they occur, staff respond quickly to support all pupils involved. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders ensure that adjustments to support positive behaviour are effective. Leaders are successful in their ambition to ensure that consistent behaviour expectations mean that pupils are prepared to conduct themselves well in wider society.

Early years

Expected standard 

Experienced and skilled staff in the early years ensure that children get off to a positive start to their education. The curriculum is carefully designed so that children build their knowledge and skills progressively. Learning is organised around meaningful topics. For example, activities linked to understanding the world enable children to develop fine motor skills through learning to use chopsticks.

Children learn their phonics securely in carefully considered groups, where teachers model accurate letter formation and word writing. Teachers prioritise the development of children's vocabulary and language appropriately. For example, lessons begin with 'wow words' that children explore with their teacher and then identify in a text. Children also draw on previously learned vocabulary and make links between words.

Staff know children and their needs well and support them effectively so that they progress through the curriculum appropriately. Leaders promote positive relationships with parents and carers. For example, they provide opportunities for them to develop an understanding of the phonics curriculum by inviting them into phonics lessons. Parents and carers value this. Staff ensure that children are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide pupils with a comprehensive range of enrichment opportunities to support their personal development and wellbeing. This includes regular sports coaching and participation in inter-school festivals and tournaments. Leaders deploy staff effectively to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils participate in these activities alongside their peers.

Pupils develop positive attitudes to healthy eating and secure their understanding of the importance of an active lifestyle from an early age. For example, in the early years, children learn about healthy gums when they brush their teeth as part of their daily routine. Assemblies support pupils to reflect on the lives of people whose experiences may differ from their own, and they are developing in their knowledge of different faiths. These opportunities help prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils understand and demonstrate personal commitment to the school's inclusive ethos. They articulate and model the ambition that 'no one is left out'. For example, pupils include their peers who may be alone at playtime. This culture strengthens pupils' moral development and builds their character.

Pupils benefit from a range of roles and responsibilities. For instance, older pupils act as librarians and class monitors. The school parliament also helps pupils develop an understanding of democracy and other fundamental British values. Pupils further benefit from a wide range of clubs, such as coding, gymnastics and bingo, which helps them develop new skills and talents.

Leaders also provide opportunities for pupils to broaden their knowledge of the world beyond their local community, for example through residential trips to London. Other visits, such as an overnight stay at an outdoor education centre, further support pupils to develop

confidence and resilience. Visits to the school's allotment and orchard, where pupils grow and eat their own vegetables and fruit, help them to develop an understanding of the importance of caring for the environment.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Too many pupils are not consistently well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is reflected in outcomes in national tests, which remain well below the national average. This is because pupils do not secure the foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. Handwriting is often weak, the quality of pupils' presentation is poor and pupils do not have the number facts required to access the mathematics curriculum with confidence. For example, pupils have not secured the necessary times tables knowledge to solve mathematical questions at an age-appropriate level.

There are, however, emerging strengths. Pupils learn phonics well. Rigorous assessment in phonics ensures that pupils read books closely matched to the words they can decode. As a result, outcomes for pupils who pass the phonics screening check in Year 1 are more positive. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Staff do not always have the pedagogical knowledge needed to ensure that teaching is as effective as it should be. Staff expectations of what pupils can achieve are inconsistent and do not reflect leaders' ambitions. Sometimes, inconsistent teaching and low expectations around how pupils present their work contribute to weak presentation and imprecise numeracy. The checks on pupils' learning are not used as effectively as they should be. For example, gaps in pupils' knowledge of number facts and technical vocabulary are not identified or addressed quickly enough. Opportunities to address misconceptions are also missed. This results in pupils completing work that is either too demanding or not sufficiently ambitious. Too often, pupils are left waiting because they have finished tasks quickly or they find the work does not reflect what they are able to do.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of education across the school. They have ensured staff have the appropriate knowledge to teach phonics, which is taught well. Leaders have ensured the curriculum is well planned and the essential knowledge that pupils should learn is clearly defined. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively by adults who have a secure understanding of their needs and help them to access the curriculum.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching, including the checks on pupils' learning, and to address the gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge in mathematics, reading and

writing, has been too slow. Although leaders are ambitious for pupils, staff do not consistently demonstrate high expectations in lessons. Consequently, the quality of pupils' work is too variable. Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should and are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education.

Leaders understand the school's context well and have rightly prioritised support for the most vulnerable pupils. They have established a targeted provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that is effective at meeting pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND progress well from their starting points. Leaders have also identified accurately where further improvements are needed.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. They value that the school goes 'above and beyond' to support their children.

Trust leaders and governors provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to school leaders. Staff are proud to work at Wilcombe Primary School. They feel valued by leaders and recognise the important contribution they make to pupils' lives. Staff appreciate the range of professional training and development opportunities available to them, but there is further work for leaders to do to ensure that teachers have the expertise to teach the curriculum consistently well. Staff are positive about the ways leaders prioritise their workload and wellbeing.

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

Leaders ensure that the school's ethos of 'Everyone is different and everyone is welcome' is fully understood and enacted by pupils. Pupils demonstrate inclusive attitudes in their learning, play and wider school life. As a result, pupils develop a clear sense of belonging and describe the school as another home. Pupils are safe and say they feel safe. The school environment is calm. Pupils know they can speak to any adult if they have concerns. Staff know pupils well and pupils feel cared for. Behaviour is positive and attendance is generally in line with the national average. Incidents of bullying are rare. The wide range of residential trips and an effective programme for personal development help prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Over the past 2 years, there have been a series of significant changes at the school, including the appointment of a new headteacher. There has been a growing number of pupils arriving from a diverse range of previous settings, who have been supported well to settle into life at this school. School leaders, supported by the trust, have taken purposeful action to address key areas for improvement. They have successfully established a targeted provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is reducing the barriers to learning for pupils with high levels of need. However, many pupils still do not receive the quality of education they deserve.

Leaders have accurately identified the next steps needed to strengthen the school, and while there are early signs of improvement, progress is neither rapid nor consistently effective. As a result, too many pupils continue their learning with gaps in their knowledge. Staff do not always have the expertise required to support pupils effectively, and their checks on pupils' learning are not used well enough to address pupils' misconceptions.

Consequently, pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they should be.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff have the pedagogical expertise needed to support pupils to learn consistently well.
 - Leaders should ensure that assessment and feedback are used effectively so that teachers identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and so they plan learning that builds securely on what pupils already know and can do.
 - Leaders should ensure that pupils develop the essential knowledge and skills they need, particularly in relation to handwriting, spelling, grammar and number facts.
 - Leaders should ensure that all staff share consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that pupils produce work of a high quality.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Harbour Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Gary Chown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sean Mackney.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Cameron Mann.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the trust education partner, the CEO, subject leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body. The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking with parents and carers. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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

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

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Peter Overton, Ofsted Inspector

Julie Fox, 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

167

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

200

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)

43.23%

Well above 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

16.77%

Well above 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

16.77%

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

Well 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	55%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	17%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	45%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	93%	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	70%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	39%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	96%	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	77%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	57%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	93%	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	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	52%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	59%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	96%	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	53%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	20%	47%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	25%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	100%	44%	Above

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	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	30%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	60%	Above

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	73%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	60%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	100%	58%	Above

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	63%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	50%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	100%	59%	Above

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	53%	68%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	20%	69%	-49 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	67%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	66%	34 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	67%	80%	-13 pp
2024/25 (revised)	30%	81%	-51 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	78%	22 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	73%	78%	-4 pp
2024/25 (revised)	60%	78%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2022/23 (final)	100%	77%	23 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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (revised)	50%	81%	-31 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	79%	-54 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	100%	79%	21 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 term)	6.1%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.8%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	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)	21.3%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	18.4%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.1%	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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