

St Thomas of Canterbury CofE Primary School

Address: Eastington Road, Lapford, Crediton, Devon, EX17 6QE

Unique reference number (URN): 137780

Inspection report: 2 June 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	●
Expected standard	● ● ● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✓ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Pupils behave remarkably well. They show respect for one another. The school 'golden rules' motivate them to do the right thing. Staff and older pupils act as positive role models. There is a calm, focused atmosphere, which is highly conducive to learning. Classrooms are vibrant, where pupils show they are keen to do their best. Playtimes are inclusive and happy, with opportunities to build friendships, climb trees, explore and build. Pupils make up their own games or ride bikes and scooters down the 'ramp'. Pupils know that trusted adults resolve any worries they may have. As a result, bullying is rare.

Leaders foster a positive culture of attendance. The supportive relationships that staff build with pupils and their families help leaders tackle attendance issues in a timely and responsive way. Consequently, pupils attend well. The free breakfast club gets pupils off to a good start to the day. Attendance figures are above national expectations overall, with particularly strong attendance for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well through the curriculum. Typically, pupils remember their learning well and make links when they encounter new knowledge and concepts. Pupils in key stage 2 learn about rivers and coasts while they revisit the science of water cycles. In geography, pupils demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the equator, climate zones and the human impact on the environment. As a result, pupils generally achieve well from their starting points, although this is not always reflected in national attainment comparisons.

Many pupils develop their transcription skills and form letters with appropriate fluency. However, some pupils do not consistently apply neat handwriting in their independent written work. This limits their ability to write with accuracy and clarity. Leaders recognise that some pupils' transcription and handwriting could be further strengthened across the school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Pupils benefit from a broad and engaging curriculum, which is suitable for mixed-age classes. Leaders have an accurate and informed understanding of what pupils should learn. They have identified the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to remember, and the order in which they should learn them. A love of reading permeates the school. Pupils have frequent opportunities to listen to and read books that capture their interests. Children in the early years quickly consolidate their knowledge of letters and phonics so they become fluent readers.

Typically, staff check pupils' understanding consistently, so misconceptions are addressed promptly. Retrieval tasks at the start of lessons support pupils to retain and deepen their understanding well. Leaders invest in staff development to strengthen the quality of teaching and regularly review its impact on pupils' progress. They ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' language and communication skills. Staff deliberately extend vocabulary by modelling words and phrases in class.

Pupils who need extra support, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are identified quickly. Teachers generally adapt learning well, so these pupils learn alongside their peers.

Early years

Expected standard 

There have been recent changes to the early years due to the addition of the new nursery. The early years curriculum develops children's understanding of words, numbers and the world around them. Foundations for learning are firmly set in the early years, where children develop curiosity through carefully laid-out learning activities. From the moment they join the setting as 2-year-olds, children learn to share, take turns and support one another.

Warm relationships between adults and children support positive development, with leaders ensuring all children are well cared for, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Children benefit from consistently high-quality interactions with adults that help them discover new ideas. Staff receive relevant training to deliver the curriculum effectively, ensuring every child enjoys a positive, personalised start to their education.

Staff support children's language development through conversations. They model speech, tell stories and sing songs. Children begin to develop their understanding of sounds in Nursery, building on this successfully through Reception, where carefully matched reading books help them become accurate and fluent readers quickly. Most children leave Reception with a good level of development, readying them for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and those known to social care are included fully in day-to-day school life. In this small school, every pupil is known and valued. Staff understand their needs and care deeply about each one. The school has clear systems for identifying pupils with SEND. Staff hold an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils' needs and barriers to learning. They use this information to identify and address gaps in pupils' understanding. Pupils receive appropriately personalised support to enable them to make progress from their starting points. For example, pupils enjoy visiting 'The Bubble', where a calm, sensory approach helps them learn and regulate their emotions.

Where needed, leaders collaborate with external specialists, such as speech and language therapists, to ensure pupils with SEND receive the support that they need. Additional funding is used well, providing a wide range of care and support for pupils and their families.

For example, leaders use it to ensure that all pupils have access to clubs, that they can learn to play an instrument and that they can attend residential visits.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Since the previous inspection, the school has improved significantly across leadership, behaviour, teaching quality and community engagement. Leaders draw on external advice and collaborate with other local schools to inform and oversee their improvement priorities. For example, staff work with colleagues to share good practice and learn from one another. Leaders hold an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. With a clear understanding of the barriers some pupils face, leaders' decisions are firmly rooted in pupils' best interests, with particular attention given to those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Trustees and governors are committed, and work closely with the school to bring about improvements. They understand and ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements. They visit the school and support and challenge leaders effectively.

Staff speak positively about the school, describing leaders as approachable, visible and genuinely committed to the wellbeing of both staff and pupils. Staff value the professional development opportunities they receive from leaders. Dedicated time for learning and growth is highly regarded, helping staff to develop and carry out their roles effectively. Community engagement is a strength of the school. Parents and carers value the school's welcoming ethos. They are actively involved in school life. 'Parent Power' days bring parents into school on a regular basis to lend their time and skills to projects and site improvements.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development curriculum is woven seamlessly through every element of school life. Pupils know the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including with regard to regular exercise, maintaining personal hygiene and the benefits of sleep. Leaders provide highly effective pastoral care. They support pupils to recognise and manage their feelings. Pupils know that being sociable with family and friends contributes to their positive mental health. The school's relationships and sex education and health education curriculum helps pupils understand how their bodies change and the importance of healthy relationships and consent.

Pupils know how to protect themselves online by not sharing personal details such as passwords. They can discuss fundamental British values with confidence. They connect this to real-life contexts, such as the Highway Code, recognising how rules exist to protect everyone.

Leaders ensure that pupils are tolerant of those who are different to themselves. Religious visitors raise awareness of different faiths and cultures. This teaches pupils to respect differences. Pupils learn to 'start small and dream big' as they learn about future careers. Visitors, including a vet, a geographer and members of the Royal Marines, help challenge stereotypes about the jobs people do.

Pupils embrace many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Music is a strength of the school, with pupils learning to play instruments including bass, guitar and drums. Most recently, some pupils have taken this further by forming their own rock band. Lunchtime clubs such as tennis, skipping, choir and eco club are well attended. Leaders track participation and ensure all pupils benefit from the school's offer, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils enjoy a range of trips and 'memorable moments' to enhance the curriculum, including visits to North Devon and residential experiences in Bristol and Dartmoor.

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

From the early years through to Year 6, pupils at this small school feel happy and safe, and genuinely love coming to learn. Attendance reflects this. Staff get to know pupils well, which means that they are alert to pupils' individual needs. The school accurately identifies any barriers to learning that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, may have. These pupils receive the support they need to make progress from their starting points.

Pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to thrive both personally and academically. This helps them to leave ready for their next stages in secondary school. Published data in national tests does not reflect the strengths of the educational offer provided by the school.

The school embraces its close-knit community where kindness and respect are second nature. Courageous spirits shine through in the pride pupils take in their school and in the way they wear their uniform and live out its values every day. Pupils know trusted adults are always there if they have a worry, and as a result, bullying is rare and behaviour throughout the school is impeccable.

Pupils are supported to be active, responsible citizens with real opportunities to make a difference. Through roles such as school councillors or house captains, and initiatives such as the recent 'skip-a-thon' to fund Year 6 leavers' hoodies, pupils take ownership of their community. They also connect beyond the school gates, supporting charities such as 'Children in Need' and joining local events such as the Harvest and Christingle celebrations at the local church.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to strengthen their work to embed strategies for developing writing and transcription so they can continue to improve pupils' achievement.
 - Leaders should continue developing the personal development programme to ensure that it has a highly positive impact on all groups of pupils.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Chulmleigh Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Neil Payne, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stephen Baber.

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 and other school staff during the inspection, including the special educational needs coordinator.

The lead inspector met with the chair of the trust board and the chair of the primary performance board and spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. It is part of the Diocese of Exeter. It is due a section 48 interim monitoring inspection, for schools of a religious character, within the next 3 years.

The school does not use alternative provision.

Head of School: Jessica Wright

Lead inspector:

Gavin Summerfield, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Sarah Jane Tustain, 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 2 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

49

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)

40.00%

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

4.08%

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

16.33%

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

Close to 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	41%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	42%	60%	Below

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	76%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	89%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	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	45%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	67%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	42%	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	45%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	56%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	73%	Below

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	9%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	62%	Above
2024/25 (final)	S	63%	S
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	18%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	9%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	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	9%	68%	-59 pp
2024/25 (final)	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	73%	80%	-7 pp
2024/25 (final)	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
Latest 3 year average	18%	78%	-60 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	9%	80%	-71 pp
2024/25 (final)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.0%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.8%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.8%	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 (3 term)	5.1%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	11.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.8%	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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