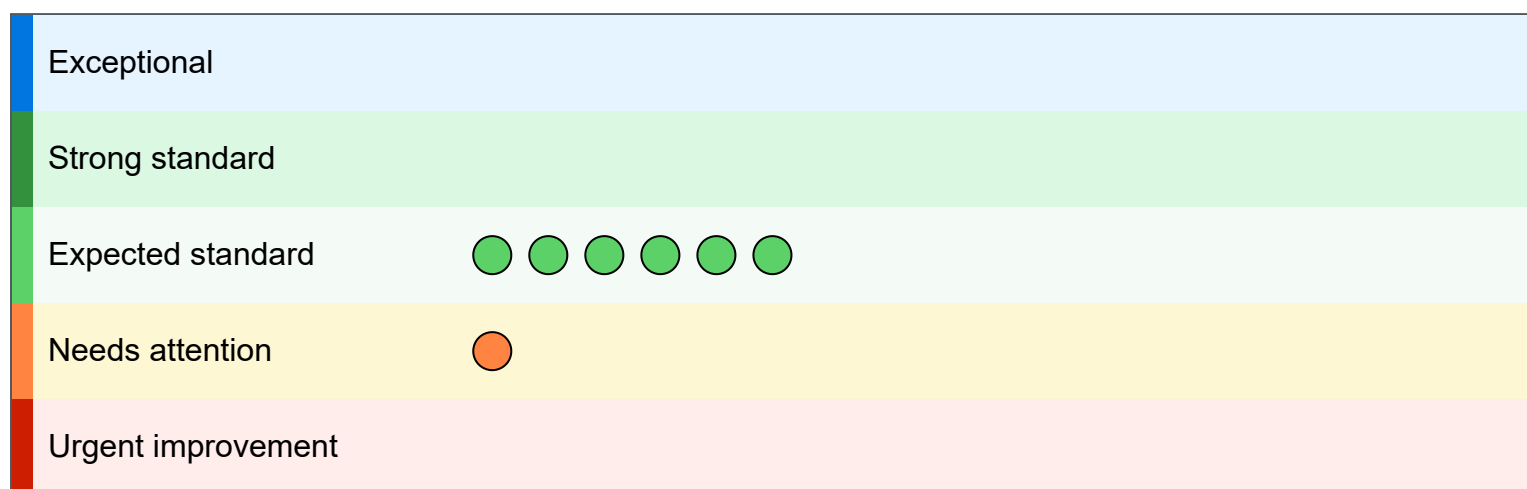


Winterbourne Valley Church of England Aided First School

Address: Winterbourne Abbas, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 9LW

Unique reference number (URN): 113820

Inspection report: 27 January 2026



✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

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

How we evaluate safeguarding

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

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

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education. Typically, published outcomes in the national multiplication tests show pupils achieve well. In school, pupils demonstrate confidence and fluency in their recall and understanding of multiplication facts.

Younger pupils achieve above the national average in the phonics screening test in Year 1. They benefit from systematic teaching of phonics, which is secure across the school. In reading, books are carefully matched to pupils' phonics knowledge. This enables them to read with a degree of fluency and confidence. They successfully recall and apply their knowledge of sounds to read unknown words. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who may have other barriers to their learning.

Gaps in pupils' basic knowledge are starting to be addressed across the school. Leaders are aware of the actions required to ensure that misconceptions are swiftly addressed through the checks that are made.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders ensure that pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. Leaders and staff know pupils well. They have a secure understanding of the barriers that some pupils may face in attending regularly. Attendance for all pupils is typically above national figures. Leaders track this carefully. They work with families to raise the profile of attendance. They emphasise the importance of pupils attending every day and on time. The impact of this work is seen in the improvements made over time.

Pupils are consistently respectful of each other. Older pupils demonstrate consideration and care. This sets a positive example for their younger peers. The behaviour policy is applied by all staff consistently. Pupils enjoy gaining points for their house teams. This creates a sense of belonging among pupils. Pupils behave well. They are motivated to learn and have positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils understand the high expectations in place at all times. For example, when using tools safely as part of outdoor forest sessions.

Well-considered pastoral support ensures that pupils' emotional wellbeing is a priority. This helps pupils to manage their feelings so that they thrive. Bullying happens rarely at this school. Pupils are confident that staff would take pupils' concerns seriously.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise the development of children's verbal and written communication. Adults model the correct language and vocabulary for children to use. Children use this language right from the start of their time in the early years.

Children demonstrate sustained engagement in the activities they choose. They benefit from high-quality interactions with staff throughout the day. This helps to move their learning on. Leaders ensure that reading is taught effectively. Children love sharing books with the staff

and each other. They start to use the sounds they know to read simple words. Children take part in a wide range of activities that help them develop important physical skills in preparation for writing. Most children are confident to write by the end of the Reception Year. The school works closely with parents and carers, sharing information about children's learning at regular times.

Children have positive relationships with staff. In the pre-school, they quickly get to know the routines. Staff are caring and nurturing. This helps children to settle and separate from parents confidently. Children cooperate well with each other. They share and play well alongside each other.

Children enjoy learning in the early years. They demonstrate progress through the early years curriculum and are prepared well for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify and understand the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as well as other disadvantaged pupils. Leaders take effective steps to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing for these pupils. Staff receive appropriate training to support pupils with SEND. Generally, staff adapt and scaffold resources to support pupils' learning in the classroom. For example, some pupils use word maps effectively to support their writing. However, for some pupils adaptations need further consideration and refinement. This is to ensure that they make as much progress from their starting points as possible.

Targets for pupils with SEND are precise and reviewed regularly. As a result, the support most pupils receive helps them to access the same learning as their peers, in an appropriate way. Leaders engage well with local partnership offers and seek advice from external partners so that pupils receive appropriate support.

Where alternative provision is used for pupils, it is carefully resourced and appropriate. Leaders take into account the welfare of pupils who access it. Although a very small group in school, the pupil premium grant is used appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils effectively. Leaders ensure that their actions related to the use of this fund are based upon external research and effective practice.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders understand the context of Winterbourne Valley First School. They correctly identify the most important areas for development. They have started to address the need for clear and consistent strategies that check pupils' knowledge across subjects. They recognise the need to focus on securing pupils' basic foundational knowledge before they can move on. This work is at an early stage.

The community has confidence in the school. Leaders have improved how they communicate with parents and carers. Parents recognise that staff care deeply about their children's education and welfare. Leaders act in the best interest of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Leaders and the governing body work productively together. They make decisions based on the right priorities. The committed governing body provides effective support and challenge to leaders. Governors understand their statutory duties and hold the school to account appropriately.

Staff are positive about the support they receive for their wellbeing and workload. Leaders work compassionately with staff to ensure that decisions they make do not negatively impact their workload. Staff benefit from a well-structured professional development programme. This is informed by research and tailored to the school's strategic priorities. Some aspects of leadership are in the early stages. Its growing capacity is starting to create sustainability and maintain the drive required to deliver further improvements.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school has a clearly designed personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. This includes the teaching of relationships and sex education and health education. The knowledge that pupils need to keep themselves safe and healthy is taught regularly. Pupils understand the importance of having positive mental and physical health. They know how to keep themselves safe online and how to report any concerns they may have. The school ensures that pupils with barriers to their learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, access the PSHE curriculum in an appropriate way.

Pupils understand the fundamental British values. This is evident in the respect that is shared between pupils and adults. Pupils talk about differences in relation to diversity. They are confident that everyone will be made to feel welcome and treated equally in their school. Pupils recognise that learning about positive friendships and relationships helps the school to remain a happy place for all.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities that extend beyond the academic. Pupils who are school councillors walk the school with pride. They articulate the school values with precision and speak with excitement about the various clubs that are on offer. Gardening and kick boxing clubs are particular favourites that pupils share. Leaders track participation in clubs to ensure that all pupils benefit from this offer.

Leaders provide a range of well-considered trips. For example, Year 4 children attend a residential visit. This helps them to develop their sense of belonging, teamwork and resilience. Pupils develop their understanding of history through visits to a Roman house and the Tutankhamun exhibition. These experiences bring learning to life and help pupils to consolidate their knowledge.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Checks on pupils' learning are not used effectively to identify gaps. Teachers do not address pupils' gaps in knowledge swiftly enough through subsequent teaching. Inaccuracies in pupils' knowledge, therefore, persist. This includes basic errors in letter and number

formation. Across the wider curriculum, while pupils can successfully recall key knowledge in some subjects, this is not consistent across subjects and year groups. Leaders recognise action is required to improve the checks on pupils' understanding.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum pupils follow is broad and designed well. They have identified the knowledge pupils need to learn for each subject. This is sequenced well. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. Pupils learn the important content set out in the curriculum. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils know the properties of materials. In the early years, children engage in fine motor control activities to support their physical development as soon as they arrive at school each day. Pupils enjoy learning the curriculum.

When reading, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as other pupils with barriers to their learning, receive the help they require to catch up quickly. This also improves their love of reading as pupils become more confident readers. Across other subjects, adaptations to ensure pupils with SEND can access the curriculum are in place. For most pupils these are effective.

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

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy school and attend well. They know and adhere to the school values of respect, kindness and courage. These values are modelled by staff and pupils across the school. Pupils respect one another and the adults who care for them.

Pupils' behaviour consistently meets leaders' high expectations. Pupils are taught how to form positive friendships. They value this teaching and recognise the positive impact it has on the choices they make. From the moment they join the school, children learn the well-established routines. This helps them to thrive as they feel safe and confident in their surroundings.

Pupils enjoy each others' company and play well together on the school playground. Older pupils support younger children at events, such as church visits. They are proud role models. Pupils know how to stay safe when online and in the wider community.

Pupils generally achieve in line with other pupils nationally and are ready for the next stage of their education. However, sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could. Teaching does not check pupils' understanding effectively. This means that pupils sometimes have inaccuracies in their knowledge that persist.

Pupils benefit from a well-developed extra-curricular programme. This helps them to discover and extend their talents and interests. The offer includes activities related to sports, the arts and music. Pupils love seeing their art work develop during the club. Singing helps the pupils feel like they belong. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the same experiences in school as their peers. Pupils enjoy trips and visits, which brings their learning to life. For example, they enjoy visiting places, such the local museum, to consolidate their learning about the Egyptians. During such trips, pupils demonstrate their knowledge of the school values. They show kindness, respect and

courage while representing their school. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they trust their adults to act swiftly should they need to.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment information effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
 - Leaders should secure pupils' foundational skills, including handwriting, by ensuring consistent practise and precise modelling across year groups so that all pupils build their fluency and accuracy over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that leadership at all levels has the capacity to be responsive, when needed, in order to secure timely improvement.
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About this inspection

Information about this inspection:

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jan Griffiths.

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, middle leaders, a selection of governors, including the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese of Salisbury.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character.

The school currently uses 2 registered alternative provisions.

Headteacher: Emma Sleightholme

Lead inspector:


Thomas Brewer, His Majesty's Inspector

Team 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 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

65

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

90

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)

4.62%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.54%

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

9.23%

Below 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).

Absence

Overall absence

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

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	4.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.6%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	5.9%	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)	15.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.3%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	13.3%	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.

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