

Creech St Michael Church of England Primary School

Hyde Lane, Creech St Michael, Taunton TA5 5QQ

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| Inspection dates | 27–28 April 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school's leadership has effectively tackled all the issues for improvement from the previous inspection. The improvements made show that the school has a strong capacity to improve further.
- Governors are now more knowledgeable and effective in holding the leadership to account.
- The headteacher and other school leaders check the quality of teaching and learning rigorously.
- Pupils' attainment by the age of 11 is above average, ensuring that all pupils are well prepared for their next school at the end of Year 6.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. All groups of pupils, including the most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and disability now achieve well.
- There has been a considerable improvement in teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers make good use of assessment in planning learning activities.
- Reception children make good progress in response to good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They welcome responsibilities such as the role of school ambassador.
- Pupils feel very safe. They are very positive about the excellent quality of care and support which the school provides for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable ones.
- Pupils appreciate the wide range of activities outside the classroom.
- In lessons, teachers plan successfully to develop English and mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects and topics.
- Staff and parents acknowledge the improvements made. A typical staff comment was, 'We are such a committed and supportive team who always strive to improve and better ourselves.'

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The best practice in teaching writing is not yet spread fully to all teachers.
- Teachers do not always ensure the best match of writing tasks to meet the particular needs of each pupil.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and progress in writing by:
 - ensuring that the best practice in teaching writing is spread consistently among all staff
 - making sure that in subjects and topics throughout the curriculum, teachers always match writing tasks to the specific learning needs of all pupils in order to enable them to reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and her leadership teams at all levels have worked tirelessly and effectively to bring about significant improvements since the previous inspection. These include improvements in pupils' achievement throughout the school and in the quality of teaching, learning and the use of assessment.
 - At the same time, existing strengths, for example in behaviour, have been maintained.
 - All groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and disability now attain above average standards and make good progress.
 - The school's leadership and governors evaluate the school's performance accurately. The senior leadership team, and increasingly subject leaders also, check the quality of teaching rigorously and regularly. Staff use assessment data much better than before to decide which pupils would benefit from additional support. The extra support provided for many pupils has greatly reduced previous gaps in attainment and progress between different groups of pupils.
 - Staff are very complimentary about the quality of professional development which they now receive. Staff recognise their accountability for ensuring progress. When evaluating staff performance, the leadership rewards staff appropriately when targets have been achieved.
 - The school's curriculum ensures that pupils develop key skills and knowledge well. It also provides interesting topics such as 'ice and fire', which are adapted for pupils according to their age and abilities. A good range of clubs, visits and other activities further enrich the curriculum. Pupils told inspectors how much they appreciate these.
 - The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, an inspector observed an assembly in which pupils were encouraged to reflect on the quality of 'resilience'. Pupils also reflect on various personal qualities when researching and writing about personalities such as Nelson Mandela and issues of faith. Many pupils write high-quality poetry, on a range of topics.
 - Pupils learn about core values such as tolerance and democracy, taught within the school's strong Christian ethos.
 - School leaders have used the pupil premium funding very effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils, for example through providing additional staff support to help them improve their mathematical and literacy skills.
 - Additional sports funding is used to good effect. For example, pupils benefit from the teaching of a physical education specialist. There has been improved pupil participation in sports, and the school has a successful record in inter-school sport.
 - The school is very inclusive. There is no discrimination. All pupils feel part of the school family and have the opportunity to do well.
 - The school engages well with parents through opportunities to attend school events such as assemblies. Regular newsletters go home. School leaders recognise that attendance, which is close to the national average, could be improved, and work very hard to persuade all parents of the need for their children to attend school regularly.
 - School leaders make good use of links with other schools, especially in the local learning partnership. This provides good opportunities for staff to work with colleagues elsewhere, for example in developing new assessment procedures. The partnership also provides opportunities for pupils to visit other schools and benefit from their resources and expertise.
 - The local authority provided effective support for the school after the previous inspection. The local authority recognises the considerable strides made by the school, and so it has reduced its monitoring role accordingly.
- **The governance of the school**
- The governing body has improved its effectiveness since the time of the previous inspection, when it was not holding the leadership sufficiently to account for the performance of the school. Governors are now very active in coming into school to check for themselves how well pupils are learning both in their lessons and from their work in books. Governors are now more confident in asking questions of the leadership about aspects of school performance, for example about the impact of the spending of pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Most governors now understand the significance of assessment data and what it tells them about the achievement of pupils compared to other schools nationally. They no longer rely mainly on the headteacher's reports. Governors also know the strengths and areas for development in teaching.

- The governing body communicates well with parents. Governors update their expertise and know their responsibilities for safeguarding through a planned programme of training. They make sure that school policies are relevant and up to date. Governors oversee the process by which the performance management of staff is carried out.
- The governing body now plays a valuable role in the school’s drive towards excellence, and the part governors have played in moving the school forward is one of the reasons why the school shows a strong capacity for further improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Inspectors talked with staff to confirm that they were well aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and they knew the appropriate procedures for identifying and following up any concerns they might have about any safeguarding issue. Pupils themselves and their parents are made very aware of potential safety issues, for example when using computers. Staff knowledge is regularly updated, such as when considering potential issues relating to radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection. In particular, teachers are much more adept at using assessment information to plan appropriate work for all groups of pupils, and to identify those individual pupils who would benefit from particular support. Teachers now have higher expectations generally of what pupils can achieve. The improvement is evident in the leadership’s records, and parents also recognise it.
- Staff talk enthusiastically about the good-quality training they now get, for example in teaching particular subjects or topics. This makes them more confident and skilled in setting appropriately challenging tasks, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Support staff have also benefited considerably from good training opportunities. The amount of skilled support has increased significantly during the past two years. It has resulted in good progress for many pupils, including those who have special educational needs and disability. These often get support in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, sometimes outside lessons. An inspector saw very effective teaching of mathematics to a small group of able pupils, who benefited from the extra challenges to answer complex questions and explain their reasoning.
- There is very thorough marking of pupils’ work. Staff follow the school’s policy on giving feedback to pupils. Pupils get precise and constructive feedback on what they have done well and what could be improved. Pupils frequently respond to comments directly. Pupils often assess their own work and that of their classmates.
- Inspectors saw firsthand the effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- The most-able pupils usually get opportunities to study topics in depth, which enables them to make good progress. Equally, the teaching of disadvantaged pupils and those with learning difficulties has been effective in accelerating the progress of those groups.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved. Teachers are now more skilled and confident in the subject.
- The teaching of reading has improved. Pupils read regularly at school and usually at home also. There has been an impressive improvement in reading results.
- Teachers show high expectations of what pupils can do in their writing. It is very noticeable in the high quality of presentation in most pupils’ books. Pupils take pride in their work. However, occasionally the written work which pupils do, often when studying topics outside of literacy lessons, is not matched to particular pupils’ needs as well as it could be. In these cases, some pupils do not achieve as well as they might in all lessons.
- The school’s leadership also recognises that staff would benefit if more of the very good teaching practice now typical of the school could be spread even more widely to all staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils and parents confirm that pupils feel very safe in school. When pupils join the school, they are quickly and fully integrated with their new classmates. For example, the school has worked very effectively to support the small number of Traveller children in the school.
- A few parents do not feel that pupils who have special educational needs and disability get as much support as they should. However, the inspectors found that the amount of care and support is very

impressive. It is very evident in the very good progress that most of these pupils now make.

- Several disadvantaged pupils enjoy the breakfast club which operates each day. Pupils also enjoy the after-school club.
- The school works hard to develop the links between schools so that pupils move as seamlessly as possible between the various settings. For example, there are strong links between the Reception Year and the nearby pre-schools. For older pupils, there are very good links with local secondary schools.
- The school takes great pride in its development of pupils as rounded and responsible young people. The success can increasingly be seen in improved results, as well as the confidence and well-being of pupils. Pupils enjoy responsibilities such as serving as school ambassadors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Inspectors observed good and sometimes exemplary behaviour both in lessons and in other areas of the school. The good behaviour is confirmed by parents and staff, and also by school records. Rarely does the standard of behaviour slip, and on these occasions staff manage it well. There have been no recent exclusions of pupils and no racist or homophobic incidents on school premises.
- Pupils talking to inspectors confirmed that they understand the potential dangers inherent in bullying, and that it is not an issue or concern for them.
- Pupils are very welcoming to visitors and support each other well. Older pupils enjoy helping younger children.
- Attendance has remained close to the national average in recent years, although staff work very hard to improve it and engage with all parents, including those who are less easy for the school to reach.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Attainment and progress have improved since the previous inspection. This was already evident in last year's test results, except in the Year 1 phonics check when the few disadvantaged pupils did less well than other pupils.
- Standards in English and mathematics, achieved by the end of Year 2, were above average last year – a big improvement on the previous three years. For pupils in key stage 2, by the age of 11, attainment was above average in all subjects.
- The school has built on these successes since last year, so that most pupils are on track to meet or exceed their expected targets.
- Last year boys made the expected level of progress by the age of 11. All other groups made better than expected progress. The school has built on this success. Increasing numbers of pupils are exceeding the expected rates of progress for pupils nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils share in the good progress, partly because the school works hard to give them opportunities to learn in more depth and with more challenge.
- There are few disadvantaged pupils in several classes, and so statistical comparisons have limited value. However, individually these pupils make good progress, sometimes at an even greater rate than other pupils.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs and disability make good progress and get good support from staff.
- Where there had been gaps between the rates of progress of different groups, for example with boys making slower progress in reading than girls, these have been significantly reduced or eliminated. Staff have carefully analysed the needs of all groups as well as individuals and then tailored teaching approaches accordingly. New resources have been acquired or improved, such as the type of reading material available.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics have improved as teachers have got to grips with new approaches to the teaching of the subject.
- Attainment and progress in reading have improved. Inspectors saw phonics being taught effectively. Reading is regularly encouraged in class and at home. Inspectors heard pupils of all abilities reading with good levels of confidence, fluency and accuracy.
- Attainment in writing has improved. Progress in writing is particularly impressive higher up the school, with pupils writing considerable amounts in a range of styles and on a range of subjects, including some impressive poetry. Rapid progress in developing early writing skills is also evident lower down the school.
- Good progress is evident in other subjects too. Inspectors saw good progress in physical education, taught by a specialist. Pupils do an impressive amount of work in science, writing up their investigative science experiments.

- Although progress in writing is good, rates of progress in writing are still more variable than in other subjects. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing are not high enough, or do not match the individual needs of every pupil. The school leadership recognises that the best teaching practice could still be shared more effectively among school staff to further increase the rate of progress in writing.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join Reception with varying levels of knowledge and skill, although often they are below what is typical of their age. Rates of progress have been variable in the past. For example, last year some girls did not make as much progress as might have been expected.
- Progress is now more consistent, and increasing numbers of children are making progress which will result in a good level of development by the end of Reception, so that they are well prepared for Year 1. Gaps in achievement between different groups have narrowed.
- The good rate of progress is evident in children's 'Learning Journeys' as well as in other examples of their work. Inspectors saw children making good progress in phonics in lessons, and children enthusiastically developing their writing skills in a variety of contexts.
- Children are taught well. Occasionally, some children are less focused than they might be when doing activities away from staff, and interactions are less effective. However, teaching is typically characterised by high expectations.
- Staff assess children's progress frequently and carefully, and usually adjust tasks accordingly.
- Children behave well, learning and playing cooperatively. Often they learn well with older pupils in Year 1.
- Staff encourage parents to come into school to share their children's experiences. Parents appreciate the high level of care and support for their children, who feel very safe in school.
- There is good leadership of early years. Staff work to establish good relationships with pre-school providers. Staff make very good use of the good range of indoor and outdoor resources and the stimulating learning environment.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 123793 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 10012362 |

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 259 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ruth Farrow |
| Headteacher | Jan McCarthy |
| Telephone number | 01823 442 898 |
| Website | www.creechstmichaelprimary.co.uk/ |
| Email address | office@creech-st-michael.somerset.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 3–4 June 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school is close to the average size for a primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The school caters for a very small number of Traveller children.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those that are looked after) is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and disability is above average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations of attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in Reception attend full-time alongside Year 1 pupils, in two classes.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 10 lessons. They carried out several of the observations jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited other lessons for shorter periods.
- Inspectors looked extensively at pupils' work in books. They also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors met with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with four governors and he had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information about pupils' current progress and information about safeguarding.
- Inspectors analysed 69 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). They also looked at 17 responses to the staff online questionnaire, comments posted by parents and evidence from the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views.

Inspection team

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