

Inspection of The Duchy School Bradninch

Bowley Meadow, Townlands, Bradninch, Exeter, Devon EX5 4RF

Inspection dates:	23 and 24 April 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Simon Roberts. 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.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto of 'mighty oaks from little acorns grow' shines through many aspects of school life. Pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally at this exceptional school. They eagerly embrace the 'create' values of curiosity, respect, equality, ambition, tenacity and empathy. They act on these and can explain their meaning. For example, pupils reflect maturely on their learning about equality. They understand, appreciate and respect people's differences, such as religion or gender, and celebrate things that are common to all people.

Pupils understand the school's high expectations for how they should behave. Consistent routines start in the early years where children learn together well. In the playground, pupils play together harmoniously. They enjoy their own games, dressing up or dancing to music with staff. As a result, school is fun and enjoyable. Pupils feel safe and happy. They love school.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs and activities on offer. There is 'something for everyone'. These include photography, tag-rugby, eco club and quidditch. They learn to sing, play musical instruments and delight in the many performances that the school plans for them. The school is a friendly, supportive and positive environment where pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), flourish.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior staff, including governors and trustees, lead the school extremely well. They are determined to provide the very best learning experiences for all pupils. The published outcomes across the school show that pupils consistently achieve very well in all areas.

The school has designed a highly ambitious curriculum. 'Knowledge buttons' break learning down so that pupils build on what they already know and gain an impressive depth of understanding. Pupils confidently make connections between current and prior learning. For example, in history, pupils make comparisons between the belief systems of the Romans, Mayans and Greeks. In mathematics, children in the Reception Year learn about the concepts of 'more or less'. Older pupils build on this and learn how to read and interpret different mathematical scales.

The school selects high-quality texts, using these to inspire pupils to read widely and often. Story time is a joyous part of the day. Children in the Reception Year listen to stories from the 'Favourite Four'. Older pupils enjoy reading and visiting the school's inviting library. Phonics learning begins as soon as children start school. Children build the phonics knowledge that they need to read with confidence and fluency. Skilled adults provide effective support to help pupils who require additional help to keep up.

The quality of older pupils' writing is consistently high. However, in the early years, the school does not give sufficient focus to developing children's early writing skills, including letter formation. This slows the pace at which children become fluent writers.

The school provides pupils with different opportunities to show what they know. For example, pupils demonstrate their understanding through the school's own 'hexagon' assessments, showing a deep understanding of subject content. They explain their learning in depth, with detail and enthusiasm.

The school's work to support pupils with SEND and other disadvantaged pupils is exceptional. These pupils receive individualised support to ensure they achieve success. Where appropriate, pupils with SEND experience a bespoke curriculum. More typically, staff make expert adjustments that enable them to learn effectively alongside their peers. As a result, these pupils achieve the best possible outcomes.

Pupils' wider development is impressive. They learn about personal safety, healthy relationships, the dangers of the internet and what they must do to keep themselves safe online. Pupils' knowledge of the fundamental British values and the protected characteristics is strong. The school meticulously designs experiences, like 'Friendship Groups'. These help pupils to develop a strong awareness of culture and diversity through discussion about current affairs like International Women's Day or Remembrance. Pupil leadership groups play an active role in school life. Members of the school council speak proudly of how they have improved the school site. Sports leaders set up weekly running challenges and librarians encourage pupils to change their books and learn about different authors.

Trustees and governors understand their responsibilities. They support and challenge the school effectively. With the support of the trust, the school ensures that staff benefit from highly effective professional development. Staff overwhelmingly agree that leaders consider their workload and well-being. They feel proud to work at this successful school.

Parents and carers speak highly about the education provided by the school and also the provision for the development of 'the whole child.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's focus on letter formation and transcription for children in the early years is not sharp enough. This hinders the quality of children's early writing skills. The trust and the school need to refine their approach to writing in the early years so that children gain the necessary knowledge and skills to become proficient writers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140078
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10366174
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sean Mackney
CEO of the trust	Gary Chown
Headteacher	Simon Roberts
Website	www.duchy.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 May 2015 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Harbour Schools Partnership.
- The headteacher started his position in September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, school staff, parents and pupils. The lead inspector had a telephone call with the CEO of the trust, the trust primary lead and the chair and vice chair of the trust board. He also met with the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also met with curriculum leaders and looked at pupils' work in other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime. In addition, inspectors met with pupils to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Gavin Summerfield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Shirley

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

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 <http://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 2025