Berkley Church of England First School

Address: Berkley Street, Berkley, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5JH

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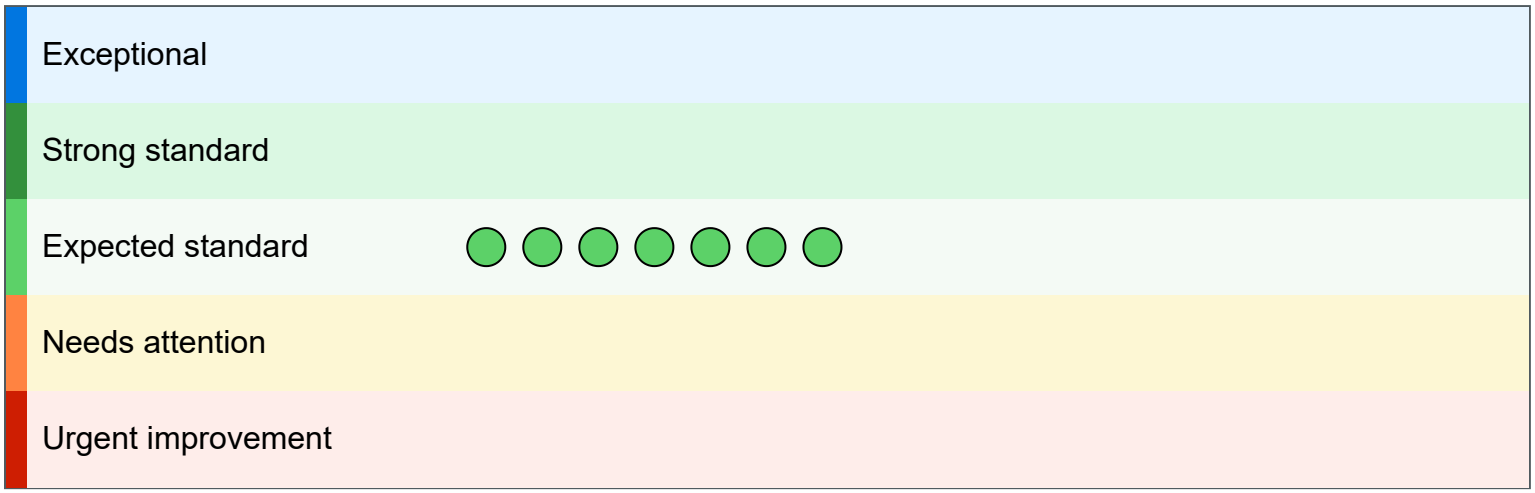
Inspection report: 21 April 2026



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

Leaders have raised expectations of how well pupils should learn and achieve. They have improved teaching and the way that pupils' progression through the curriculum is checked. This is leading to pupils progressing more securely through the curriculum.

In most subjects, pupils benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum that is taught effectively. Pupils learn important knowledge and recall what they have learned. For example, when learning history, older pupils use their knowledge of the Romans when learning about other ancient civilisations. Where the curriculum is less well sequenced, including pupils' speaking and listening, pupils are not always able to discuss their learning and explain their thinking clearly. In those areas of the curriculum, some pupils do not progress as well as they could.

Pupils gain a secure knowledge of mathematics. However, until recently, pupils did not develop the rapid recall of multiplication facts that they needed. This meant that pupils in Year 4 did not achieve as well as other pupils in the national year 4 times tables assessment. Leaders have addressed this issue. Pupils now get the support they need to develop this important knowledge.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders prioritise attendance. Staff monitor pupils' absence closely, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Staff communicate with parents and carers promptly if there are any concerns. Where necessary, leaders put appropriate support in place to help disadvantaged pupils attend more regularly. As a result, most pupils attend well and overall rates of absence are improving.

Pupils behave well because leaders have strengthened the way that the school manages pupils' behaviour. Staff have embraced the updated approach to managing behaviour, including setting clear expectations and consequences. They apply these routines with consistency. Leaders ensure that pupils receive the support they need to manage their behaviour well. This has a positive impact on how pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to manage their emotions and regulate their behaviour. Regular communication ensures that parents are kept well informed of their child's behaviour. Any poor behaviour is closely monitored. Low-level disruption is rare and pupils play well together at social times. As a result, Berkley is a safe, calm school where pupils get on well together and can learn without distraction.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have ensured that the school focuses on the foundational knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum and teaching in these areas helps pupils to develop a secure grounding. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress to ensure that pupils gain the basic knowledge they need to be ready for the next stage in their education. This means that pupils with gaps in their foundational knowledge are identified quickly and receive timely support to help them catch up.

In most subjects, the school has clearly identified what pupils need to learn and when they will learn it. Staff make sure pupils learn important knowledge accurately the first time they come across it. Teachers also use this information to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. For example, in phonics, staff ensure that pupils swiftly learn the correct pronunciation and are supported to correct errors when these occur. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In writing, for example, staff do not always ensure that pupils form their letters correctly. When this happens, pupils embed misconceptions rather than learning key aspects of letter formation accurately from the outset.

Early years

Expected standard

Children enjoy their time in the Reception year and most are well prepared for the challenges ahead. They enjoy the range of activities and understand the rules and routines of the classroom. Children pay close attention to staff during phonics sessions and progress well in their reading as a result. Staff ensure that activities engage and motivate the children. As a result, children are curious and able to access the learning. This is evident in the children's high level of excitement and interest when working on their story-based project about an alien.

The curriculum is well sequenced for most areas of learning. This supports staff to know what to focus on during activities. Staff spend time getting to know children and their starting points. Staff have benefited from training to help them clarify the purpose of activities and to make adaptions for pupils with specific needs so that all children are supported to make progress. As elsewhere in the school, the curriculum is less well sequenced in the areas of communication and language. For example, the way children learn the early skills of speaking and listening is not clearly set out. This makes it harder for staff to support children's language development.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Every pupil is treated as an individual in this small school. Leaders have strengthened the support that disadvantaged pupils receive. The school carefully identifies their needs and, when necessary, puts extra support in place to help pupils to flourish. Leaders carefully check this work to ensure that additional funding is well used and has a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders have made changes to improve the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These changes followed a review of how well the support in place was meeting pupils' needs. As a result, staff receive training to understand pupils' needs and how to provide appropriate support in lessons. Leaders ensure that all pupils learn the knowledge they need to access the curriculum. The way the school manages pupils' behaviour supports pupils with SEND to behave well.

Parents of pupils with SEND appreciate the support their children receive. As a result of the school's work, pupils with SEND are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Following a period of instability, governors acted swiftly to strengthen leadership at the school. The school has benefited from external support during a period of transition that has strengthened leadership. Leaders have secured improvements to the quality of education and care that pupils receive. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas where more work is needed.

Leaders' actions have improved the quality of the curriculum. It is well sequenced in most subjects and supports pupils to gain the foundational knowledge they need. Leaders have provided staff with professional learning and support to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. These improvements are leading to pupils making more consistent progress in their learning. However, leaders are aware that the quality of teaching is not yet consistently secure in all areas of the curriculum.

Staff speak positively about the recent changes to the school. They feel well supported and appreciate that leaders consider their workload.

Governors are committed to the school and are aware of the need to strengthen aspects of their work. Since the last inspection, governors have developed their oversight of the school's performance. However, they do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the school's performance compared with schools nationally. This affects how well they challenge and check on the impact of leaders' actions.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out personal development programme that begins in the Reception class. The programme builds pupils' knowledge and understanding as they progress through the school. Weekly sessions are supplemented by additional opportunities and a package of pastoral support. As a result, pupils are confident that the school will always help and support them. Pupils learn to understand and respect difference. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and what these mean in school, for example understanding that democracy means everyone having their say.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities and experiences that enhance the curriculum. Staff organise a range of visitors, trips and experiences that pupils enjoy. The school develops pupils' sporting interests by linking with other schools and joining in local sporting events. Pupils appreciate the opportunities on offer. They are enthusiastic about the range of activities, particularly the Year 4 residential trip. Leaders ensure that all pupils access the opportunities on offer.

Pastoral support is effective and has a positive impact on the academic and social progress children make. Pupils value the pastoral support they receive and the opportunities to talk to a trusted adult. Pupils have a clear understanding of how the school helps them, for example knowing they can access additional support in 'The Den' when they need it. The school has a well-developed programme to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing. This programme is delivered effectively through whole-class activities and one-to-one support

when pupils need it. It is supported further through assemblies, where pupils learn about gratitude and reflect positively on what they are thankful for.

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

Berkley is a happy school with a close-knit community. Pupils benefit from the improvements that leaders and staff have made since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. As a result, all pupils participate fully in lesson activities and take part in all aspects of school life. Pupils are happy, behave well and achieve well. They are ready for the next stage of their education.

Parents and carers value the school and appreciate that their children are happy and well looked after. Many parents comment positively on recent improvements to the school. They feel well informed about their child's progress and are confident that their children receive the support they need to do well.

Pupils say the school is full of friendship and that they have kind staff who always look after them. Pupils enjoy the enrichment opportunities the school provides, such as learning in the outside classroom and going on interesting trips. Children in the early years are curious and excited to learn. They benefit from warm interactions with staff.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. This is because leaders have successfully strengthened the rules and routines that enable pupils to behave well. Pupils enjoy their playtime and get on well together. They are polite and treat adults and other pupils with care. Pupils' personal development is carefully nurtured. Pupils understand how to stay safe and make positive choices. Bullying is rare and, when issues arise, staff deal with them promptly

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Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum, particularly for speaking and listening, is clearly sequenced across early years and the wider school so that pupils build communication skills progressively and explain their learning confidently.
- Those responsible for governance should ensure that they understand more comprehensively how well the school is performing so they can check the impact of leaders' actions on school improvement and pupils' outcomes.

About this inspection

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following out renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

The school has undergone some significant changes in senior leadership since the last inspection. Some senior leadership roles are now interim while the school seeks academy status.

The chair of the board of governors of this school is Tom Woolman.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and several leaders, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. Inspectors also spoke with the governing body and representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school.

The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The previous section 48 inspection took place in October 2023.

The school uses no alternative provision.

Interim executive headteacher: Dan Jeffries

Lead inspector:
Phil Minns, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspector:
Katharine Anstey, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

75
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

110
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)

13.33%
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

1.33%
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

12.00%
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).

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)	5.4%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.8%	5.5%	Close to average
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)	9.4%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	12.0%	14.6%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	9.9%	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.

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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