



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR CREECH ST MICHAEL CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of School:	Creech St Michael Church of England Primary School
Headteacher/Principal:	Jan McCarthy
Hub:	Somerset
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	26/01/2022
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	13/01/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	05/10/2021

**REVIEW REPORT FOR
CREECH ST MICHAEL CHURCH OF
ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL****1. Context and character of the school**

Creech St Michael Church of England Primary School has ten mixed-age classes from 4 to 11 years. The school has grown substantially in recent years, due to extensive building nearby and its popularity in the local community. It is situated in a rural area, close to the Somerset county town of Taunton. The school is over-subscribed and a considerable proportion of pupils attend from outside the catchment area.

The large majority of children are of White British origin, although there are pupils from six out of the seventeen ethnic minority groups, and a small number from service families. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a little higher than the national average. The number of disadvantaged pupils has risen in recent years and is close to national averages.

After a long period of stability, there have been a number of staff changes recently due to the retirement of some key members of staff. This has necessitated a reallocation of many roles and responsibilities, including within the senior leadership team. The changes have been managed pragmatically, with insight and expertise, so limiting any disruptions to the provision.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The experienced headteacher leads the school with passion and confidence. She is a very positive role model for all stakeholders and is supported effectively by senior and middle leaders, together with a proactive and well-informed governing body.
- Leaders show genuine commitment in providing stimulating and interesting learning experiences for all pupils. These are related to each half term's value for learning, with themes running throughout each year, such as creativity, truthfulness and compassion. Relationships between pupils and with adults are warm and friendly, with mutual respect very evident. The emphasis on promoting productive teamwork across the school helps to secure an energetic and inclusive climate for learning. This collegial approach is exemplified in the school's vision of 'together we love, learn and grow'.
- Leaders at all levels work as a close team and know their school and the needs of pupils well. This was exemplified during the enforced school closures when the staff team worked very successfully together to provide the best possible learning and pastoral care for all. Notably, newer members of staff emphasise the support and warm welcome they received when joining the school.
- Pupils are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain through the school's comprehensive PSHE programme, with cultural diversity and world religions being explored in collective worship and lessons. Curriculum topics also encompass a

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global or environmental perspective, whenever appropriate. In addition, pupils have many opportunities to aspire to leadership responsibilities, such as being elected to the school council, becoming a school ambassador, a digital leader, a sports leader or lunchtime buddy.

- Pupils speak confidently about the wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities they enjoy. They are popular and well-attended, and include dance, taekwondo, recorders, arts and crafts and junk modelling. A range of visits and visitors are planned to complement the curriculum and to develop pupils' cultural capital. There are residential trips offered to all Years 4 and 6 pupils, forest school sessions, and whole-school events, such as number or skipping days. Disadvantaged pupils receive funded places as a matter of course. Furthermore, leaders are clearly committed to supporting pupils to develop transferable sports skills, with opportunities to compete at all levels against other schools. This encourages pupils to build resilience, to accept that they will make mistakes and be happy to ask for help, alongside fostering independence, whenever suitable.
- The school is of huge significance in the locality and the staff team has forged strong links with the local community, including with the adjacent pre-school, faith leaders and places of worship. Communications with parents are consistently positive, being enhanced further by the additional links developed during remote learning.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

- ... key stage subject leaders had more opportunities to gain a broader understanding of the teaching and learning of their respective subjects in other phases throughout the school.
- ... a similar approach to the successful phonics coaching model was developed during the current focus on mathematics subject and pedagogical knowledge.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The staff team are working hard to ensure coherence and progression in the broad and balanced curriculum. This is particularly challenging due to the complex, mixed-age class structure. Leaders and teachers review each subject on a rolling programme to ensure that pupils do not revisit themes inappropriately. A subject-based topic approach is taken, with identification of big ideas which develop additional coherence and chronological understanding across the foundation subjects in each theme. The big ideas include aspects such as food and farming, education, and religion and worship.
- The curriculum is unique to the school and helps pupils to understand and celebrate the local area, in conjunction with national and global dimensions. For instance, fieldwork will be carried out in the surrounding countryside, as well as

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studies of the village churches, the canal and discussions with older residents who recall many of the changes in the recent past. The learning environment is spacious and well-resourced, indoors and outside, and outdoor learning in the beautiful grounds is given priority in the wider curriculum.

- Leaders and teachers benefit from productive links with other schools locally and through the English and Mathematics Hubs. The Key Stage 1 leader is a moderator of standards for the local authority which brings additional insight and clarity to moderation and assessment. Professional development opportunities are planned in line with school and leadership priorities, such as play therapy interventions, whole-staff music training and coaching sessions for support staff.
- The subject knowledge of class teachers is strong, and they show accuracy in their own use of speech and language. In a Year 4/5 geography lesson, for example, the teacher showed excellent knowledge of the formation of mountains and used this to question pupils about their prior learning and then extended their understanding with high quality questioning.
- The interests of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are captured well through explicit teaching and modelling which links to prior learning in a stimulating environment. Consequently, children settle quickly into school life and make rapid progress.
- Outcomes in early reading and phonics are above national averages, due to the consistent and carefully planned delivery of the systematic programme. Teachers and teaching assistants benefit from regular coaching sessions to share best practice, with regular assessments helping to ensure groupings are accurate.
- The emphasis on reading continues into older year groups, with high-quality texts linked with topics. Reading for pleasure is promoted with inviting class reading areas, teacher recommendations, a welcoming and well-stocked library, daily class reading, and author of the moment studies. Pupils can confidently name a range of popular authors and illustrators.
- The school is focusing appropriately on securing higher outcomes in writing, which is reflected in the commendable standards of writing evident on the whole-school writing wall display and in pupils' books across the curriculum. There is emphasis currently on improving pupils' stamina. A whole-school writing competition is promoting much enthusiasm, and many excellent entries have been submitted.
- A mastery approach to the teaching and learning of mathematics is being developed. In lessons, adults show sound subject knowledge and effectively address misconceptions.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next stages of their education. In recent years, outcomes at Key Stage 2 have been above national averages. Progress measure trends from pupils' starting points are consistently positive in all subjects.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

- ... the new writing scheme became embedded so that a consistency of approach helped to secure improved writing outcomes.
- ... the areas identified in the mathematics improvement plan were fully actioned and embedded.
- ... recently appointed teaching assistants had opportunities to shadow more experienced colleagues to help develop their practice.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- The SEND co-ordinator is experienced and knowledgeable, she speaks with clarity and conviction about securing the best provision for the most vulnerable pupils. The leader is assisted by two other staff members who also hold the SENDCo qualification and work closely with the leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils. The pastoral team liaises effectively with numerous external agencies which further enriches and extends the school's offer.
- Leaders and other adults clearly know every vulnerable pupil well and focus appropriately on meeting their individual needs, showing care and compassion in the support given. Consequently, the pupils thrive in the inclusive approach established. Leaders have established strong relationships with wider families and undertake regular contact calls to keep parents informed.
- The curriculum is adapted to best meet the needs of SEND and disadvantaged pupils, with a structured intervention programme undertaken alongside the commitment to quality first teaching. The skilled interventions are led by qualified teachers who use a six-week cycle to work on identified gaps in learning, with regular feedback to the phase leaders. As a result of this targeted support and challenge, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils mostly make accelerated progress from their starting points. Recent emphasis has been on building and developing pupils' vocabulary which is helping to address the whole-school writing initiative.
- Teaching assistants have received much specialist training and work closely with the intervention teachers to deliver individual programmes with considerable skill and insight.
- A celebration portfolio is maintained for every pupil with an education, health and care plan. These provide delightful evidence of the progress that pupils with the most significant needs make from their individual starting points, both personally and academically.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils with additional needs are tracked carefully, with consistent routines and high expectations proving successful in limiting and de-escalating any issues.

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- Attendance rates are similar to national averages. Leaders are currently focusing on improving attendance to pre-pandemic levels, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The range of initiatives and close liaison with families are clearly helping to reduce absenteeism.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

- ... the learning gaps for disadvantaged pupils, which increased during the enforced school closures, continued to diminish.
- ... new approaches were offered to encourage the parents of disadvantaged pupils to support reading skills at home.

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable.

6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

The school is very happy with the quality assurance review system, although would like the local hub to be more active. Leaders are now looking to seek further opportunities across the national network.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.

Schools can access the School Support Directory; the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.