

Inspection of Woolacombe School

Beach Road, Woolacombe, Devon EX34 7BT

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Gail Holmes. This school is part of the Alumnis Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Neil Moir, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gill Marlow.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Woolacombe School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Woolacombe School are rightly proud of their school. They are happy, safe and well cared for. They learn in a calm and nurturing environment. Pupils love their school. As a result, attendance is high. The school values, 'believe, belong, become' thread through the school. Pupils treat everyone with respect.

The school is determined for pupils to succeed. Staff have high expectations for all pupils to reach their potential. Pupils live up to these and learn successfully. This starts in the early years where children thrive. They learn with confidence and show curiosity about the world.

The school has put personal development at the heart of pupils' education. It is a high priority and a real strength. The school provides many enrichment opportunities that go beyond the academic. Pupils know their voice matters. They value the extensive range of leadership opportunities such as eco-warriors and peer mediators. They are involved in activities that they know will make a difference. For example, pupils are considering the effect of plastic pollution linked to sustainability.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. The knowledge pupils need to know and remember has been considered and sequenced, starting in the early years. The school has recently developed the curriculum in some subjects to ensure that all pupils learn the curriculum well.

For subjects that are well established, pupils build their knowledge successfully over time. Teachers use a variety of strategies to help pupils learn. For example, pupils recap prior learning to build their knowledge based on what they have learnt before. Assessment is used to successfully identify how well pupils are learning. Where curriculum subjects are fully embedded, pupils are building their knowledge securely over time.

Some subjects have a new curriculum in place and so they are in their infancy of implementation. Pupils are learning the new curriculum well. For example, in geography, Year 6 pupils have a secure knowledge about the human and physical features of Mexico. However, some pupils find it hard to remember what they have learned before. This makes it more difficult for pupils to build their knowledge well over time.

Reading is a high priority. A love of reading runs through the school. Books have been carefully selected to cover a range of genres. In addition, texts have been chosen to widen pupils' knowledge of culture and diversity. Staff share their own enjoyment of reading with pupils and families as 'reading dragons' who 'devour' books. They share their recommendations with the community. As a result, pupils take pleasure in sharing their favourites. Pupils are taught to read successfully. This

is because staff have the expertise they need to do this well. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. This helps them to become confident readers.

Children in early years get off to a strong start. Relationships between children and adults are a strength and help children to settle well. The development of language is a priority within the curriculum. Staff design learning activities to promote this. For example, in Nursery, adults helped children to explore 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' using small figures, bowls and porridge to retell the story.

Teachers adapt learning to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the curriculum alongside their peers. However, some of these pupils do not get all the support they need. This is because the school has not identified with enough precision the support pupils need. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not build their knowledge securely.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils know the school routines well. Because of this, pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and take pride in their work. This starts in the early years where children transition through the setting successfully.

The school has placed pupil's character development at the heart of the school. The school's bespoke approach to personal development, 'the Woolacombe way,' challenges every pupil to excel. The school go above and beyond to embed this for all pupils. For example, regular productions help pupils shine, including those that are disadvantaged. This helps pupils to develop their confidence. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to ensure that they are respectful, responsible and active citizens. For example, pupils helped the National Trust to plant trees in the local combe.

Those responsible for governance know the school well. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively and hold school leaders to account for the quality of education pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject developments are in their infancy. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their prior knowledge and so find it more difficult to build on what they know and remember. The trust needs to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and learning is adapted to enable all pupils build their knowledge well.

- Some pupils with SEND do not receive all the support they need to catch up. This is because the school has not identified with enough precision the help pupils need. This prevents some pupils from building their knowledge securely over time. The trust must ensure that precise support for pupils with SEND is identified so these pupils can learn the curriculum well.

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	145765
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256643
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gill Marlow
CEO of the trust	Neil Moir
Headteacher	Gail Holmes
Website	www.woolacombe.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Alumnis Multi Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provide a before- and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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.
- The inspectors spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, parents, pupils, governors and representatives from the trust.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. 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 spoke to leaders and pupils about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The inspectors considered comments made by parents online during the inspection and met with some parents on the second day. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Esther Best, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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