

The Erme Primary School

Address: Station Road, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0AJ

Unique reference number (URN): 113254

Inspection report: 31 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

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

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders place an emphasis on inclusion and make sure it is at the heart of the school's work. From the beginning of the Reception Year, or at other times when pupils join the school, leaders and staff swiftly identify pupils' needs. They warm-heartedly nurture and support these pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those known to social care and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils benefit from tailored support to reduce their barriers and any anxieties. Staff carefully select resources to help pupils to grow in independence and to manage their needs. Leaders' well-crafted work with professionals bolsters this further. Therefore, from their starting points, pupils are able to learn successfully alongside their peers.

Leaders check the impact of support provided to pupils and make suitable changes when necessary. They use this information to ensure that staff receive timely and effective professional learning so that they have the expertise to meet pupils' needs. For example, a newly-introduced nurture group provides a supportive environment for some pupils with barriers to their wellbeing to learn an ambitious curriculum successfully. Any additional funding the school receives is used well to make the biggest difference for those pupils who need support.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

There is an effective personal development programme for pupils. Leaders have enhanced the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum by carefully matching it to pupils' needs and the local context. Regular visitors and tailored curriculum content provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and debate real-life scenarios. For example, pupils learn how to be safe near the sea or by the railway. There are themed weeks, such as anti-bullying and mental health awareness, which strengthen this further. For those pupils who need extra help, such as pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, staff adapt the curriculum to help pupils to understand the life skills needed to keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils learn what they need to as they mature and move on to their next stage of education.

Pupils engage in clubs, trips and residential to learn more about the world beyond where they live and nurture their interests. They engage with a range of sporting, artistic and musical activities. These include joining in with community events, such as singing at 'carols in the car park', at local care homes and festivals. Leaders now have plans to broaden the sporting and musical opportunities on offer. Pupils visit religious buildings or meet people of different faiths, which helps them to understand and embrace different beliefs and cultures in modern Britain. Pupils deepen their understanding of equality and diversity through the well-selected books which they read across the curriculum. They know the importance of treating others with respect and display genuine care and pride in their peers' achievements.

The pastoral support provided by staff enables pupils to manage their emotions and feel ready to learn. Pupils say they are well cared for and value the safe spaces on offer. They talk openly about the strategies they use to help them to learn and succeed.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils, including some who have barriers to their learning, do not achieve well enough in national tests and assessments over time. Too many pupils leave school not fully prepared for their next stage of education. This is because historic weaknesses in the curriculum have left pupils with gaps in their knowledge and skills. For example, older pupils show fragility in their handwriting and with times table fluency. Furthermore, too many pupils do not take pride in the work they produce.

Leaders are taking effective action to improve what pupils know and can do. Typically, pupils talk knowledgeably about their current learning across the curriculum. For example, older pupils hold informed discussions about the positive and negative impact of the industrial revolution in history. Younger pupils are beginning to secure the knowledge they need to help them to learn to read and write. However, it is too early to determine the impact of leaders' work on published outcomes.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

As a result of leaders' oversight, there is a newly-introduced approach to managing pupils' behaviour across the school. Therefore, behaviour in the classroom and at social times is improving. For many, there is a calm and respectful learning environment. Pupils like the positive approach to ensuring high expectations of their behaviour. For example, a lunchtime club helps to resolve friendship issues. However, staff do not yet typically insist on these standards in lessons, meaning wasted learning time and less positive attitudes to learning for some. Furthermore, pupils do not fully understand what bullying is and some pupils continue to be unkind towards others. While bullying or any form of abuse is not tolerated, leaders recognise that it does happen occasionally.

Leaders' accurate and robust oversight of attendance means most pupils attend school regularly. Through effective relationships with parents and carers, as well as a shared, unrelenting expectation of high attendance and punctuality, leaders and staff make sure that pupils are in school and ready to learn.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The school's work to bring about change is beginning to positively impact pupils. However, the quality of teaching is not consistently effective and hampers how well pupils learn. While staff understand pupils' needs, teaching does not always effectively model learning or provide pupils with activities to help them think more deeply. This means that some pupils do not persevere with their work or build on their knowledge over time. In contrast, support is typically adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with barriers to their learning.

Leaders have taken decisive actions to improve the curriculum. There is now an ambitious curriculum that considers the essential knowledge for pupils to master. It increases in

complexity over time and is sequenced in a way intended to support pupils to build on prior learning. Leaders take deliberate actions to ensure that teachers have the knowledge they need for the subjects they teach. For example, recently strengthened music and French curriculums enhance teachers' confidence.

Pupils now learn to read effectively from the Reception Year. Pupils who need support with reading to catch up and keep up receive timely interventions. Similarly, pupils typically develop the spoken language and spelling skills they need to be successful. Leaders have recently strengthened the curriculum to develop number fluency and handwriting across the school. This work is in its infancy, so its impact is not fully evident.

Early years

Needs attention 

While leaders recognise the importance of high-quality education in the early years, there is more to do to improve the quality of teaching and adult interactions so that teaching maximises learning and language development. To this end, leaders have used expertise from across the federation to develop professional learning and provide support to strengthen provision in the Reception Year.

There is now a well-considered curriculum in place that supports children to learn what they need to be ready for key stage 1. Leaders have considered the transition into and beyond the Reception Year to shape the curriculum that children will learn. Teachers sequence this learning into clear milestones to help children build knowledge progressively. From the outset, children learn the sounds that letters make, so they begin to learn how to read and write successfully. They also deepen their understanding of counting and mathematical concepts throughout their time in the Reception class.

During independent play, children broadly focus on their learning and interact calmly with their peers. Staff typically support children to play and communicate kindly with their friends. Pupils show enjoyment in their learning. For example, they use pipes and water to solve how to move objects from a starting point to the finish line. Children become increasingly independent, both in self-care and managing their feelings. To support this, staff develop effective relationships with parents and carers.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

After a period of instability, leaders have precisely identified the school's priorities for improvement and are taking suitable actions to address these deficiencies. Leaders and governors do not shy away from where the school needs further improvement. In fact, they strive for excellence and act in the best interests of pupils, particularly those pupils with additional barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. Leaders understand the need to continue to increase the rigour and pace of this improvement work to provide assurances to an unsettled parental community.

Leaders prioritise staff support and their professional learning. This prioritisation has helped build a cohesive staff community, whose members work effectively to further improve the school. For example, in more recent months, professional learning has begun to build expertise in how to effectively teach the curriculum. For some year groups, this is having a

positive early impact for pupils. Staff appreciate the support of the school and the federation, who they say thoughtfully consider their workload and wellbeing.

Those responsible for governance understand and enact their roles clearly. They have the required knowledge to effectively support and challenge the work of the school as it continues to improve. They maintain stringent oversight of leaders' work, so they are assured that the quality of education for pupils continues to strengthen over time.

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

Pupils benefit from caring support from staff, in a school where everyone knows them. They are greeted warmly at the start of each day, which encourages pupils to attend well and on time. Staff quickly get to know pupils and provide swift help to reduce any barriers to their learning and wellbeing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities settle quickly and make progress from their starting points. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, trust that adults will support them and this helps them to feel safe. Pupils say that staff 'really care'.

Pupils are now benefiting from recent improvements to the school. They learn an ambitious and enriching curriculum. Many pupils show a renewed enthusiasm to learn new topics in their lessons, for example about tornadoes in geography or the Vikings in history. However, the quality of teaching for pupils is not fully effective across the school. This means that pupils do not secure the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for their next stage of education. Furthermore, some pupils do not always show positive attitudes to their learning in lessons.

At social times, pupils typically play well together. For example, in key stage 1, pupils play traditional playground games harmoniously with their friends. Older pupils enjoy their 'play leader' responsibilities, regularly teaching younger pupils new games. Bullying is rare. When there are cases of bullying, these are dealt with quickly and effectively. However, some pupils can display unkind behaviour towards their friends, which a new behaviour system is beginning to tackle.

After a period of leadership and staffing turbulence, pupils feel part of a whole-school community, whose members are learning to be the best that they can be. A new 'super council' is starting to support issues in the local community and fundraise for charities. Visits and visitors, from the local community and beyond, prepare pupils well for life beyond their local area. House captains and vice-house captains enact their roles with pride, including leading 'Friday celebrations', which pupils value.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to take action to improve the quality of teaching across the school, embedding effective teaching approaches that support pupils to learn effectively.

- Leaders should support staff to raise their expectations of pupils' engagement within lessons so that pupils display pride in their work and have positive attitudes to learning.
 - Leaders need to effectively address the gaps in older pupils' foundational knowledge so that they achieve as well as their peers nationally.
 - Leaders should continue to increase the rigour and pace to bring about the improvements required so that pupils consistently benefit from a high-quality education.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jackie Enright. The school is part of a federation called Exe Valley & Moorsway Federation.

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

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

Inspectors spoke with the head of school, the executive principal for the federation and two school improvement leaders within the federation. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority, governors, staff, pupils and parents and carers during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school uses no alternative provision.

The school has undergone some significant leadership and staffing changes since the previous inspection.

Head of school: Leanne Penhallurick

Lead inspector:

Donna Briggs, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Suzannah Teagle, 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 31 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

98

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

175

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)

20.41%

Close to 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

7.14%

Well above 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

28.57%

Well above 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).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	27%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	13%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	44%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	83%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	62%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	44%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	35%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	38%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	50%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	24%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	14%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	14%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	59%	Below

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	14%	68%	-53 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-50 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	78%	-21 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	33%	77%	-44 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	14%	80%	-65 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	17%	79%	-63 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	5.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	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)	18.1%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	20.9%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	14.6%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

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