

West Croft School

Address: Coronation Road, Bideford, Devon, EX39 3DE

Unique reference number (URN): 113132

Inspection report: 19 May 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.

This school requires special measures

His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires **special measures** because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Needs attention

Personal development and wellbeing

Needs attention 

The school's planned provision for pupils' personal development and wellbeing covers the statutory requirements and is appropriate. However, the learning from this is not consistently demonstrated in pupils' day-to-day conduct. Pupils understand personal characteristics and recognise that families may have different structures. Many pupils show respect for others whose lives differ from their own. However, there are occasions when some pupils' conduct is disrespectful to others and shows a lack of understanding of equality.

Pupils have access to a range of opportunities to broaden their experiences beyond the local community, including residential visits to London and Bristol. They also take part in activities such as African drumming sessions. In addition, trips linked to the curriculum help pupils to deepen their knowledge, for example visits to Westward Ho! to learn about coastal erosion. Through shopping trips, pupils learn how to budget and develop their knowledge about healthy eating options. However, pupils' knowledge of different religions and cultures is underdeveloped. They show limited recall of their learning in this area.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values, including through weekly assemblies. They have opportunities to take part in democratic processes, such as electing members of the school council. The school council contributes to initiatives that support environmental action and raise funds for charity.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online and understand the potential risks of excessive use. When incidents related to online safety occur, leaders respond promptly to support pupils and help them remain safe.

Urgent improvement

Achievement

Urgent improvement 

Not enough pupils at this school are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is reflected in the results in national tests, which are below national averages. Too many children in the early years do not secure the knowledge they need in communication, reading and writing to be ready for key stage 1. Older pupils can talk about what they are learning in the wider curriculum. However, their written work consistently displays

weaknesses in their handwriting, spelling and use of grammar. These significant gaps in knowledge are not being tackled swiftly or effectively.

Many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not achieve as well as they should. This is in part because approaches intended to support pupils' emotional needs often lead to pupils with SEND having extended periods out of the classroom. This means they miss curriculum time, which further increases gaps in their knowledge.

Attendance and behaviour

Urgent improvement ●

While there is regular monitoring of pupils' attendance, rates have remained below the national average. School leaders do, however, work closely with families and carers to provide personalised support for those pupils who struggle coming to school. This has helped in supporting some pupils to improve their attendance.

The actions that leaders have taken to secure pupils' positive behaviour are not having the required impact. Staff do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and do not always have the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour. This means the behaviour of pupils in the classroom is dependent on which member of staff is teaching. Pupils describe regular disruptive behaviour in the classroom and at social times. There are also many pupils who dysregulate and leave the classroom without the necessary strategies in place to support them. While some pupils aim to try their best to be focused, some pupils have not developed appropriate learning behaviours to support them to achieve well.

During social times, some pupils are not able to regulate their own behaviour, leading to low-level disruption and inappropriate conduct. Poor behaviour during these times is not challenged effectively by staff. When incidents of bullying occur, school leaders take action to support all those affected. However, this does not lead to sustained improvements in behaviour.

Curriculum and teaching

Urgent improvement ●

The curriculum is appropriately planned to build pupils' knowledge and skills progressively. However, teaching is variable and lessons do not help pupils to learn well. The school has introduced new ways to check pupils' understanding, but teachers do not use them consistently. As a result, errors and misconceptions are not always systematically addressed, and gaps in pupils' knowledge grow.

Assessment is not used effectively to adapt learning to pupils' needs. This means that work is not always matched well enough to what pupils can do. As a result, pupils do not secure the skills they need to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities experience the same weaknesses in provision as their peers and do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have recently taken steps to improve the quality of education, including introducing a new phonics curriculum. Although there are early signs of improvement in some pupils'

phonics knowledge, teaching remains variable. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Early years

Urgent improvement ●

Children in the early years are limited by leaders' lack of ambition for children's achievement. Leaders do not identify or address gaps in children's basic knowledge and understanding quickly enough. Although the early years curriculum is generally appropriate and leaders have recently introduced a new phonics scheme, the impact of these changes is at an early stage. As a result, children do not develop the language, literacy and communication skills they need to be ready for the demands of key stage 1.

The activities provided in the continuous provision are limited in scope and lack a clear learning purpose. They are not sufficiently ambitious or well designed to address gaps in children's knowledge and skills. In addition, activities do not consistently support children to deepen their learning or to develop independence. Consequently, children lose focus quickly and move between different activities with limited engagement.

Staff are caring and know children well, which helps children to feel safe. However, not all staff have the skills needed to support children's learning effectively. Leaders have not ensured that staff consistently develop children's vocabulary through high-quality interactions that extend and deepen their learning. At times, children spend extended periods without meaningful interaction with adults.

Inclusion

Urgent improvement ●

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils is not effective. The support provided is inconsistent because leaders do not accurately identify pupils' needs. Assessment lacks precision, resulting in targets that are not well matched to pupils' starting points and, at times, lack ambition. Consequently, the work pupils with SEND complete is not suitably adapted and too often relies on adult support. As a result, pupils do not develop the knowledge and skills needed to become independent learners and often disengage from learning.

In contrast, those pupils who access the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs (specially resourced provision) benefit from a well-resourced classroom. In the specially resourced provision, assessment is precise and the tasks pupils complete are appropriate. As a result, the academic, social and emotional needs of these pupils are met.

Leaders have identified that disadvantaged pupils require additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy. However, their actions have not secured sustained improvements in pupils' outcomes. The school's use of alternative provision is appropriate.

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement ●

Over the past few years, the school has faced significant turbulence in its leadership and governance. School leaders have, in some areas, correctly identified what the school needs

to do to improve a legacy of poor outcomes. However, school leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to stem the decline in educational standards and the growing gaps in pupils' knowledge. Where school leaders have taken action, there are early signs of improvement in reading and literacy. However, the impact of their actions is too variable across the school. As a result, weaknesses in pupils' education continue in multiple areas.

The absence of an effective local governing body has meant school leaders have not been supported or challenged effectively. The new governors are committed to their role and ambitious for the school and the community. However, they lack educational expertise. This has meant that they are not in a position to effectively challenge leaders' overly positive view of the school and do not have a precise understanding of how the school is developing. Governors ensure their statutory duties are met.

Staff say that leaders support their workload and wellbeing. There is an ongoing programme of professional development and safeguarding training for staff. Parents value the warm and friendly staff. However, parents have mixed views of how their children are being supported at West Croft School.

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

The school has experienced considerable instability in recent years, which has negatively affected pupils' education. Pupils at West Croft Primary School do not receive an acceptable standard of education. For too long, pupils have left school at the end of Year 6 with outcomes in national tests below national standards. This means they are poorly prepared for the next stage of education. Across the school, many pupils have significant gaps in their learning. School leaders are addressing the required improvements but have not acted with the level of urgency needed to address the decline in standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not consistently receive the support they need to be successful. This is because assessment is not used precisely enough to ensure learning activities are accurately matched to what pupils are able to do.

School leaders and staff are not sufficiently ambitious for what pupils could achieve. Expectations for pupils' behaviour are inconsistent, and inappropriate behaviour is not addressed promptly. This means there are regular incidents of poor behaviour, and bullying occurs. Furthermore, pupils do not attend as regularly as they should. In the early years, actions to improve teaching are at an early stage. Leaders are not sufficiently focused on developing children's language and communication skills so that children are ready for Year 1.

Pupils enjoy coming to this welcoming school. Staff have positive relationships with pupils, which helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils know they can speak to a member of staff if they have any concerns.

Next steps

- Leaders must accurately identify the needs of pupils who face barriers to learning, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and ensure they receive the support they need to thrive.
 - Leaders must ensure that teachers can identify and address gaps in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics knowledge so that pupils can access learning and achieve well.
 - Leaders should ensure that teachers use the new assessment systems effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adapt teaching so that pupils learn well.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff apply the behaviour policy consistently so that all pupils learn in a calm, orderly environment.
 - Leaders should ensure that early years staff use information about children's starting points to plan purposeful interactions and activities that develop vocabulary, deepen understanding and strengthen writing and early communication skills.
 - Leaders and governors should strengthen how they evaluate the impact of their work, including on inclusion, so that they can take timely, effective action to address the school's urgent weaknesses.
 - Governors must develop the skills, knowledge and expertise to challenge and support leaders effectively so that they have accurate information about the quality of education pupils receive.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is James Ebsworthy.

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 by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator team and governors.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection(s) we carry out.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has nursery provision for 2- and 3-year-olds.

There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Lisa Johnston

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Tracy Hannon, Ofsted Inspector

Nicola Bray, Ofsted Inspector

Claire Bunting, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

484

Well above 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

630

Well above 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)

42.76%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.75%

Close to 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

16.74%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SLCN - Speech, language and Communication

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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	30%	61%	Below
2024/25 (final)	38%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	29%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	23%	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	54%	74%	Below
2024/25 (final)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	48%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	48%	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	37%	72%	Below
2024/25 (final)	42%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	41%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	28%	71%	Below

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	49%	73%	Below
2024/25 (final)	52%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	42%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	52%	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	23%	46%	Below
2024/25 (final)	34%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	18%	46%	Below
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	47%	62%	Below
2024/25 (final)	59%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	60%	Below

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	31%	59%	Below
2024/25 (final)	39%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	33%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	20%	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	41%	60%	Below
2024/25 (final)	41%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	46%	59%	Below

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	23%	68%	-44 pp
2024/25 (final)	34%	69%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	18%	67%	-50 pp
2022/23 (final)	17%	66%	-49 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	47%	80%	-32 pp
2024/25 (final)	59%	81%	-22 pp
2023/24 (final)	42%	80%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	78%	-38 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	31%	78%	-46 pp
2024/25 (final)	39%	78%	-39 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	78%	-44 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	20%	77%	-57 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	41%	80%	-38 pp
2024/25 (final)	41%	81%	-39 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	79%	-42 pp
2022/23 (final)	46%	79%	-33 pp

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 (3 term)	6.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	5.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.9%	5.9%	Above

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 (3 term)	20.5%	13.0%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	16.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	22.9%	16.2%	Above

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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