

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic Primary

Cross Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4ST

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Catholic Primary is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils are proud of their school and embrace the school's motto, 'Let Your Light Shine'. They relate this to doing their best and serving others.

There are many opportunities for pupils to shine, such as being a school councillor, a prefect or a Mini Vinnie. Pupils can excel themselves while playing in competitions, such as a recent football competition at Sheffield United, where some Year 3 pupils proudly won overall. Pupils might also shine while growing their talents in one of the many after-school clubs.

Pupils' behaviour is highly positive. They walk wonderfully and line up smartly as they move around school. They hold doors open and have amazing manners. Pupils of different ages help each other when playing in all the lunchtime activities. Many parents and carers comment on the strong sense of community among pupils. Pupils say this is about treating everyone as equals and with respect, and looking out for each other.

The school has great ambition for all pupils to shine. They are continually developing the curriculum so pupils can achieve well in all subjects. Pupils respond enthusiastically. They listen carefully and work hard in all lessons. They achieve increasingly well.

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

The school is determined that all pupils read fluently. Pupils start learning to read as soon as they join school in the Reception-age classes. They read books that match their progress on the phonics programme. Expertly trained staff quickly identify pupils who fall behind in phonics. They provide extra support to make sure these pupils catch up. Once they are accurate and fluent readers, pupils enjoy selecting books from the library. There is an appealing range to choose from. All pupils enjoy regular visits to the town library. The school continually promotes the love of reading. Pupils enjoy it when their teachers

read a story or the class novel to them. As a reward, pupils delight in receiving a token for the book vending machine.

The school has developed an ambitious and engaging curriculum. The school trains and mentors the enthusiastic subject leaders well to lead these developments. For most subjects, the school has precisely identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. This knowledge is carefully sequenced so that pupils gradually build on what they know. Mostly, pupils gain detailed knowledge of the curriculum. However, there are a few areas where the development work is not yet complete. Pupils' learning in these areas is not as strong in these aspects.

Teachers present new knowledge and explain the curriculum well. They use diagrams and model actions to help pupils understand important concepts and vocabulary. For example, they might move like a balance scale to aid younger pupils' understanding of the equals sign and equality. They encourage pupils to use the correct vocabulary when explaining what they know. Teachers skilfully question and probe pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions that may arise. They use quizzes and tests to check that pupils remember what they have been taught. They revisit knowledge that pupils have found difficult to understand. Teachers select the right activities and resources for pupils to try out new knowledge and develop their skills. However, occasionally pupils do not spend enough time practising these. They move on to the next step or challenge before they have fully grasped what they are learning. This leaves some pupils feeling less confident as their knowledge is not secure.

The school wants the best for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are well supported. The needs of pupils with SEND are precisely identified. Teachers make effective adaptations so these pupils can learn the same curriculum as their peers. To support their learning of new topics, the school provides disadvantaged pupils with additional activities that their more advantaged peers may already benefit from.

Through the weekly 'shine time', the school spotlights important values. Staff present information and hold discussions with pupils on important issues. For example, pupils learn about staying safe, including when they are online. They also learn about life in modern Britain. Older pupils quickly recall the nine protected characteristics and the five fundamental British values. They know why equality and values such as democracy and tolerance are important. Pupils explain, for example, about their freedoms but are also mindful of the consequences of doing and saying as you please. They are respectful of different races as well as religions beyond Catholicism.

Staff are equally proud of the school and their part in the community. They feel well supported and encouraged to develop professionally.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is in the process of being reviewed. The school has not sequenced all of the key knowledge that pupils should learn. Where this is the case, pupils sometimes do not build their knowledge or understanding as well as they could. The school should complete their work in these areas and check that the curriculum is having the full desired impact on pupils' knowledge.
- On some occasions, pupils do not have enough opportunity or time to practise what they are learning. Sometimes pupils are moved on to the next step or a more challenging activity before they are ready. As a result, their knowledge is not as secure as it should be, and this leaves some pupils feeling less confident. The school should ensure that they allow sufficient opportunity for pupils to practise and develop a secure understanding of what they are learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2018.

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	112898
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10339659
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mario Santoro
Headteacher	Nicola Brown
Website	www.st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 December 2018 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Hallam. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place on 6 June 2019.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with senior leaders of the school and considered a range of documentation provided. She met with governors and a representative from the Diocese of Hallam and also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector conducted deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector held

discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. She listened as pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during playtime.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils, staff and some parents. She also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, as well as the staff and the pupil surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.

Inspection team

Claire Stylianides, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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