

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

Silverdale Road, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2TA

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a warm and welcoming place. Pupils enjoy school and are happy. Bullying does not worry them. Pupils know that leaders will respond to any reported incidences of bullying and take effective action.

Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. There is a strong sense of pastoral care across the school, which reflects the school's Catholic values. All staff and pupils care about each other. One comment by a pupil is shared by many others, 'The school is a community, we all help each other.' As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place in which to learn, and pupils say they feel safe.

Leaders have high aspirations for what the pupils can achieve. Staff expect pupils to work hard and try their best. Pupils live up to these expectations and achieve well. This begins in Nursery when children begin to develop good listening skills.

Pupils value the opportunities beyond the classroom that leaders provide for them. This includes a range of clubs such as football, drama and recorders. They speak enthusiastically about trips to the zoo and a Greek bakery. Leaders help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. For example, they can be a school ambassador, sports leader or guardian angel. Pupils take on these responsibilities willingly.

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

All leaders and staff have a clear vision for the school. They want all pupils to achieve the best they can. Leaders have created an environment in which pupils enjoy learning. They think carefully about the subjects that pupils learn. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn a broad range of subjects alongside their peers. This prepares pupils well for their next steps.

Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach. They use assessment well to check pupils' learning and identify where they need extra help. Consequently,

pupils learn the curriculum well and make good progress. Lessons are well planned and sequenced. Teachers regularly revisit pupils' prior learning; this helps learning to stick in pupils' minds.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. They have revamped the school library. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 can train to be a reading mentor, and pupils read to a reading dog that comes into school. Pupils enjoy reading both fiction and non-fiction books. A new reading scheme has been introduced this year. This starts in Nursery. Most staff have had training in how to deliver the programme. Leaders check how well pupils are learning to read. Most pupils are developing into confident, fluent readers. If pupils fall behind, leaders provide them with extra help. However, the reading scheme is still relatively new. Leaders know there is more work to do to fully embed the scheme.

Pupils with SEND say they enjoy school. Adults take good care of them. Teachers create pupil passports for all pupils with SEND. The plans describe what the pupils need help with. However, leaders have not ensured that they are precise enough. They do not accurately identify what staff need to do to help pupils with their learning or manage their emotions. This limits pupils' progress.

In the early years, adults use resources well to support pupils' literacy and numeracy. The 'dive into twelve' key texts promote children's enjoyment of reading. Teachers identify key words for the day. This helps to develop pupils' vocabulary. Adults' consistent approach to teaching number prepares children well for their learning in Year 1. Good routines for behaviour begin in Nursery. For example, adults insist on children taking turns. These expectations continue throughout other year groups. This leads to pupils behaving well in school.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. They teach them how to be responsible, active citizens. Pupils raise money for charity or make donations to organisations in the local community. Parents and carers value the opportunities available to their children. A comment made by a parent reflects the views of many others: 'My child is not just learning academically, but also spiritually and how to be a kind and caring person.'

Staff work closely together and support each other well. They say that leaders have an open-door policy and can always be approached if they need help. Staff appreciate this. Leaders consider their well-being and workload. They make staff's workload more manageable. For example, they give teachers time to plan together.

Directors and governors are committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve and that pupils are happy and enjoy their learning. They provide leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge. For example, they make sure that services bought in by the school provide good value for money. This helps to ensure pupils receive high-quality provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take pupils' welfare seriously. Leaders make sure staff know about potential risks to pupils in the local area. Staff report concerns confident in the knowledge that leaders will deal with them effectively. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families get the right help at the time it is needed.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, in computing, they learn how to keep themselves safe when working online. Pupils know, for example, not to share their personal information online. Therefore, pupils are safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not yet fully embedded the new reading scheme. This means that some pupils do not develop into confident and fluent readers quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver the programme to a consistently high standard so that all pupils learn to read well.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils with SEND are supported with their learning as well as they could be. Information about what support will look like for individual pupils is not precise enough. This means that pupils may not be fully achieving their potential. Leaders need to ensure that staff are enabled to plan and deliver effective additional support for pupils with SEND.

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 January 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140803
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10211285
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	395
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gillian Regan
Headteacher	Denise Mellor
Website	www.stmarycatholicprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Christ the King Catholic Collegiate multi-academy company (MAC). The MAC consists of six schools.
- A section 48 inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's Catholic Primary School as a Catholic school took place in January 2017.
- The headteacher was appointed to the school in April 2019.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club operating on the site. This provision is managed by the school.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school has provision for three-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders, members of the local governing

body (LGB), the chair of the LGB, the chair and vice-chair of the board, the chief executive officer, staff and pupils.

- The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the diocese. She also met online with the leader of the alternative provision used by the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.
- The inspector talked to pupils and staff at unstructured times during the day.
- The inspector talked to parents at the school gate.
- The inspector evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The inspector checked the single central record and met with the school's safeguarding leaders.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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