

St Mary Roman Catholic Primary School

Melbourn Road, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7DB

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, ably supported by the school team and governors, has created an excellent environment for learning. Pupils thrive in this school both in terms of their academic achievement and their personal well-being.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are high. This is because all groups of pupils make rapid progress across the school. Teaching in these subjects and the use of assessment are excellent.
- Teaching has many strengths across a range of subjects, including science, history, information and communication technology (ICT), music, physical education and the arts. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school places good emphasis on developing pupils' social and emotional skills. Initiatives such as the 'growth mind set' have had a marked effect on pupils' attitudes to learning and their resilience with work that they find difficult.
- Across the school and in lessons, pupils are very well behaved. They demonstrate kindness, tolerance and respect for each other.
- School staff work effectively to ensure the well-being of all pupils including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits, which offer them many opportunities to pursue their interests and develop their talents.
- Children in the early years receive a great start to their education in school. They make rapid progress and are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- Staff benefit from a training and performance management programme that has created an environment where all are continually trying to improve their practice. There is a strong team spirit and staff are excellent role models for the pupils.
- The school improvement plan identifies key priorities that need further development. These include the wider application of mathematics in other subjects, and developing the use of the outside environment for learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enrich the curriculum by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics skills in other subjects
 - ensuring that when planning the curriculum, opportunities to work outside are a regular feature so that leaders can meet their aims in the school improvement plan.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has created an environment for learning in which there are high expectations of all teachers and pupils. The whole school community thrives because of the bespoke care and attention given to ensuring that pupils and staff can achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders and governors have created an excellent learning community. As the headteacher commented, 'There is always something new to learn.' School leaders capitalise on the opportunity to share and learn from best practice through productive partnerships in the trust, working with Herts for Learning and other schools in Royston.
- An example of the effectiveness of these partnerships is the significant improvement in provision and outcomes in the early years since the last inspection. Leaders and governors identified that this was an area for development and acted on the advice of local authority advisers. Consequently, the provision is now outstanding.
- Leadership at all levels is highly effective. All staff, however experienced, are empowered and aided to make a contribution to the development of the school. All aspects of the school are effectively led.
- Procedures to assess and track pupils are used expertly to provide work that is pitched at the right level and to give those who require it the additional support they need to succeed. This is a key reason why pupils regardless of ability and background make such rapid progress.
- All staff benefit from tailored training and guidance to ensure that the quality of teaching consistently improves across the school. Staff appreciate the care and attention paid to them by school leaders and governors, which enables them to carry out their work so effectively.
- The curriculum is exciting and enriching. There are many extra-curricular opportunities that pupils enthusiastically spoke about. For example, from Year 2 upwards, pupils take part in annual residential visits. Not only do they gain socially from these experiences but teachers use the opportunity to enable pupils to apply the skills they have learned in the classroom in real situations, such as using their mapping skills when orienteering.
- Pupils benefit from a well-developed curriculum for religious education. This makes a major contribution to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain and teaching them about British values. For example, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the concept of justice, which they had recently been learning about. Even children in the early years are introduced to the idea of democracy when they were observed voting to decide which activity to do next.
- The PE and sport premium funding is used well to provide pupils with expert specialist teaching and also to help teachers to improve their practice. Activities such as 'Wakey Shaky' help to foster healthy lifestyles.
- Funding to support the small group of disadvantaged pupils and also those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well used. Pupils make rapid

progress and often more rapid than their peers because of this. Staff work expertly with pupils and their parents to overcome the barriers to achievement whether they are academic or pastoral.

- Responses from parents demonstrate how much they appreciate the quality of education the school provides. The daily use of Twitter on the school website gives them an immediate insight into the activities that their children are taking part in.

Governance

- Governance is effective. The local governing body is rightly empowered to take responsibility for all aspects of governance by the trust. Governors are very knowledgeable about the work of school leaders and the strategic direction being taken by the school as recorded in the school improvement plan.
- Governors make regular checks to assure themselves that leaders are maintaining high standards and excellent provision.
- Regular reports are presented to governors about pupil progress and the performance of teachers. This enables them to challenge and support school leaders effectively on school performance, ensuring that staff are rewarded appropriately.
- Governors meet all statutory requirements including those for safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All aspects related to the recruitment of staff and ensuring that they are appropriate people to work with children are secure and well managed. Safeguarding training is up to date for all staff and regular checks are made to ensure that staff are alerted when training needs renewing.
- Procedures associated with child protection are secure. The school keeps careful records and acts swiftly in partnership with outside agencies to keep vulnerable pupils safe.
- Certain staff in school, such as the learning mentor, are appropriately trained to support pupils who experience emotional or mental health problems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- It is unusual to find a school where pupils make such consistently rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the high quality of teaching and the excellent advice and guidance that pupils receive when taking the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils also benefit from high-quality teaching and learning across a range of other subjects. For example, in science in Year 6 the school partnership with York University and a national business means that pupils take part in high-quality investigative work, which gives them an excellent preparation for studying science in secondary school.
- Teachers capitalise on opportunities in other subjects to enable pupils to practise their

literacy skills. For example, in history pupils write high-quality accounts and in geography pupils use computing to develop their research skills when carrying out project work.

- Typically, lessons are interesting and challenging for all pupils. Relationships are excellent and pupils cooperate well with each other. Assessment information is used expertly to pitch work at the right level for pupils so that it is not too hard or too easy.
- Guidance given to pupils is excellent. Initiatives such as 'Feedback Friday' mean that every week pupils receive bespoke advice on the next steps in their learning which helps them to make rapid progress.
- Homework is well received by pupils and parents. Activities are relevant and related to the work that pupils are doing in school. Pupils appreciate the range of activities that they are able to choose from.
- Teaching assistants make a major contribution to the education of pupils. They are very well trained with the necessary skills to support small groups or individual pupils. This helps to ensure that the pupils who experience barriers to their learning are given the correct specific help to overcome them.
- Many pupils leave school being able to read music. All Year 3 pupils play an instrument and many take the opportunity to have lessons on other instruments at school or to pursue their interests privately at home.
- Teachers are taking more opportunity to enrich lessons by using the outside environment. For example, pupils were proud to show the artwork that has been created in the school's wooded area. This aspect is being developed still further within the school improvement plan as leaders and teachers recognise the motivational effect that this work has on pupils.
- In mathematics, pupils do not benefit from as many opportunities to apply their mathematics skills as they do when applying literacy skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is sophisticated. The atmosphere in school fosters respect, tolerance and kindness. Pupils feel safe and thrive to become socially and emotionally mature. Nearly every parent who commented on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed their appreciation for the individual care that their children receive.
- One feature of the care pupils have for each other is the help that older pupils like to give younger pupils, for example in the weekly shared reading sessions that all take part in. In addition, one group of girls explained enthusiastically how they had been helping younger pupils with mathematics in the playground to help them recognise shapes.
- Vulnerable pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported by specifically trained staff. Leaders and teachers work very effectively in partnership with

parents to meet the needs of their children.

- Pupils spoken to could not recall an incidence of bullying. School records support this. Nevertheless, school leaders have been conscientious in ensuring that pupils understand what bullying is and how to deal with it if it occurs.
- The importance of keeping safe online when on mobile phones and computers is taught regularly and well understood by the pupils spoken to.
- The school's before and after school clubs give pupils a safe and secure start and end to the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A striking feature when watching pupils play outside is their self-discipline. They play together happily and safely and very rarely have to be reminded about behaviour rules.
- In school and in lessons, it is rare to witness any misbehaviour. Certainly none was seen during the inspection. Nor did inspectors witness teachers having to remind pupils about their behaviour. This demonstrates the excellent attitudes for learning and play that have been nurtured within the school.
- In lessons, pupils often tackle very challenging work with determination, concentrating for long periods of time to complete tasks. For example, in Year 4, pupils were learning about symmetry and had to complete some challenging tasks where they mapped the mirror image of shapes. Pupils were seen concentrating on checking and rechecking their work to make sure that they had arrived at the correct solutions.
- Attendance is well above average and there have been no exclusions in recent years.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Unvalidated assessment information for 2017 indicates that the school's results at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are impressive. Attainment in all subjects was high and for all groups. Progress for all groups in these subjects at the end of key stage 2 is outstanding. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they are extremely well prepared with the literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed at key stage 3.
- One impressive result is that all the pupils in Year 6 in 2017 attained the expected level in mathematics. Approximately a third of the pupils in this cohort had SEN and/or disabilities. This outcome demonstrates the highly effective support that pupils receive to overcome the barriers to their learning.
- Current assessment information indicates that progress and attainment are similar to last academic year. In all years, all groups of pupils are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in phonics in 2017 was above average and has been similar in recent years. Those who did not achieve the required standard last year are being given precise support and they

demonstrate that they are now fluent readers.

- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils from Nursery to Year 6, achieve well. Assessment information indicates that by the end of Year 6 the proportion that achieve the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics is more than double that found nationally.
- Across the school, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics. The numbers in each year are too small to report on. The progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have made improvements to pupils' handwriting. By the time they leave the school, most pupils have developed a mature cursive style.
- Pupils produce work of high quality across a range of subjects demonstrating the necessary skills and conceptual development that they will need to pursue these subjects successfully to GCSE level.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is outstanding. The quality of provision has improved considerably over the last two years because of the high expectations of leaders and the expertise of staff. Leaders have ensured that all staff are very well trained and supervised and contribute fully to the work of this highly effective team.
- On entry to the Nursery, most children have skills developed to a greater level than those found typically. From these starting points, most children make rapid progress and the proportion that leaves with a good level of development is above the national average. Assessment information for 2017 indicates that this year the proportions that gained a good level of development were high.
- The most able children make outstanding progress. Assessment information indicates that the proportion who are exceeding expectations is more than double that found across the rest of Hertfordshire in most areas of learning.
- There is a close and effective link between assessments, observations in individual children's learning journeys and the next steps that children embark on. Staff are expert at capturing development in useful observations that are used to plan activities for children. Learning journals form a detailed record of the progress children are making and give parents helpful information.
- The curriculum in both Reception and Nursery provides an excellent balance of child-initiated play and adult-led activity both inside and outside the classroom. Adults watch children closely and capture every opportunity to develop and consolidate learning.
- Children work very cooperatively together and concentrate well on the many purposeful activities that they are presented with. They are imaginative and creative and able to articulate well what it is they are doing.
- It is impressive to see how well children in the Nursery have adapted to their new environment. They are happy and confident as witnessed in a PE lesson during the inspection.

- Typically, teachers and teaching assistants use expert questioning and discussion skills to develop and consolidate learning. All the activities are carefully designed to maximise the opportunities for learning of all children regardless of their ability.
- Staff work effectively to identify those who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are vulnerable. In partnership with parents, they act swiftly to provide high-quality support and intervention. Parents of these children are extremely appreciative of the support they receive from the school.
- Early years leaders and staff have established very productive relationships with parents and the other pre-school settings they draw from. Transition is expertly managed so that children settle quickly. There are many comments from parents about how delighted they are at the progress made by their children.
- Safeguarding in the early years is secure.

School details

Unique reference number	138292
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031480

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Williams
Headteacher	Julia Pearce
Telephone number	01763 246021
Website	www.st-marys-royston.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@st-marys-royston.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements for the publication of specific information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is an academy which is part of the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion who have a statement of educational needs and those who have an education, health and care plan, is below average.

- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and after school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders including middle leaders, a group of pupils, the learning mentor, the chair of the academy trust and governors.
- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors observed learning in all classes for parts of lessons, some jointly with the headteacher or assistant headteachers.
- Inspectors looked in detail at a range of pupils' books. Inspectors heard some pupils read and spoke with pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's checks on the suitability of adults to work with children, and other documentation regarding safer recruitment of staff. Inspectors scrutinised the school's own self-evaluation document, plans for improvement, minutes of governing body meetings, and documentation regarding child protection.
- The response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 33 free texts sent by parents and carers, 23 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire from staff and 58 responses from pupils were examined.

Inspection team

Tim Bristow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Copping

Ofsted Inspector

David Milligan

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018