

St Mary of Charity C of E (Aided) Primary School

Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AP

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides outstanding and inspirational leadership for the school. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and, together with other senior leaders, they form a strong and determined team.
- All leaders, staff and governors share the vision and ambition to provide the best possible experiences for pupils.
- Expectations for all are uncompromising and very high. The school has improved dramatically since becoming an academy. Leaders have created a culture of ambition and aspiration for pupils and staff that flows through the school community and beyond.
- Pupils' outcomes have improved significantly. Pupils make excellent progress. They achieve exceptionally well in reading, writing and mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils are very effectively supported to make strong progress from their starting points.
- Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils are motivated and inspired by their teachers. They enjoy learning and want to do well.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They are happy and make strong progress. Assessment information can lack the precision that helps to determine the next steps that children need to take in their learning.
- Pupils thrive at the school because they are extremely well looked after in a nurturing, well-ordered and secure environment. They are encouraged to have high aspirations for themselves and a 'can do' attitude.
- Individual academic, social, emotional and spiritual needs are carefully identified and supported. Respect for and understanding of diversity in all its forms is promoted through the school values, which permeate all of the school's work.
- The curriculum ensures that there are excellent and innovative opportunities for pupils' academic and personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, in lessons and throughout the school. Pupils are friendly, polite and articulate, and develop as well-rounded, interesting individuals.
- Rigorous safeguarding procedures and the high importance placed on pupils' well-being ensure that pupils feel safe and secure.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there is more precision in the assessments made in the early years and that the information is used more even more effectively to identify the next steps in children's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. She has fostered a 'can do' approach to all aspects of the school's work. Her high expectations and a steely determination to provide the best for the pupils have resulted in a considerable change to the very culture and ethos of the school and a marked transformation since the school became an academy. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, and together they form a strong team. There is no complacency, however, but instead a relentless quest for pupils to excel.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciative of the changes. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment: 'I have seen both my children progress and develop both personally and academically in recent years, and have been massively impressed with the transformation that we have seen under the leadership of the current head.'
- All staff work well as a team with a shared vision. They are highly effective and appreciate opportunities to develop and enhance their skills and expertise both in subjects and in leadership roles.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous. Every aspect of the school's work is evaluated for its impact and benefit for the pupils. If any aspects are found to be slipping, appropriate and effective support is established.
- The curriculum is vibrant, highly engaging, motivating for pupils and creative. It ensures that diversity and equality are valued by pupils and prejudice is eradicated. Teachers are diligent in challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity. The curriculum is enriched by interesting trips and visitors to school. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum, which develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects for real and meaningful purposes, also incorporates qualities to help pupils develop as good citizens.
- Additional funding is used exceptionally well and kept under constant review to ensure it is making a difference for pupils. Disadvantaged pupils receive well-targeted support for their academic and personal development, are successful learners and make good progress. The spending of the primary sports funding is well thought out to have the maximum impact for pupils and enhance the skills of teachers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders. Along with the school values and fundamental British values, it is embedded across the school and skilfully woven into the curriculum.
- One parent echoed the views of many with the comment: 'The school has gone from strength to strength over the last couple of years. All of the staff I have had any dealings with have been helpful, professional and, above all, committed to the children they teach. I can't praise the head, Miss Tudor, enough. She shows so much dedication and passion for the school and pupils. She knows every child and sees them all as individuals.'

Governance of the school

- Governors share the headteacher's vision for the pursuit of excellence in the school. The governing body has a clear understanding of its role and how it operates within the trust.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the strategic direction of the school. They have a wealth of skills and experience which enables governors to challenge and support the headteacher and senior leaders and to hold them to account very effectively for the school's performance.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed by leaders and by their own monitoring work. They know where the strengths lie and what needs to be done next. The focus of their visits is linked tightly to whole-school priorities. They are dedicated and committed to the school and the whole school community.
- Governors check and challenge if necessary on the spending of additional funding to ensure that it is used appropriately and making a difference for pupils.
- The governing body, together with the trust, ensures that all statutory responsibilities are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, work very effectively to create a clear and strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The safety and well-being of pupils are very high priorities. Staff, pupils and parents agree that the school keeps pupils safe. A parent commented: 'My daughter when recently asked where she feels safe and happy, after "home" said "school", which speaks volumes about the school and staff.' Pupils are adamant that they feel very safe in school and that they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including safe use of the internet. They say that they are confident to talk to adults in school if they have any problems, and they know they will be listened to.
- Staff have an extremely good understanding of the needs of pupils, including those who may be vulnerable, and they know them really well. This means that everyone is acutely alert to any changes in pupils that might indicate a concern. Everyone takes responsibility for pupils' well-being and safety and are vigilant in doing so.
- All staff are appropriately trained, and procedures to follow are well established so that they know exactly what to do if they have a concern. Record-keeping is of the highest quality. Leaders are persistent and unrelenting in their links with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive timely and effective support when required.
- Highly effective risk assessments are conducted with rigour. An example of this is the procedure to ensure pupils' safety when using the field that is shared with the neighbouring grammar school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders work determinedly to ensure that teaching captures the interests and imagination of pupils. Pupils are highly motivated, develop a thirst for learning and are absorbed in all that they do. They make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very positive relationships with pupils and high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, work hard and strive to do well. They persevere and show resilience. When asked what teachers do to help pupils learn well, a group agreed with the comment from one pupil that 'they never give up on us'. Pupils thrive in the 'can do' culture which is promoted exceptionally well by all adults.
- During lessons, pupils' understanding and any misconceptions are quickly picked up through teachers' skilful questioning. Teachers probe and extend pupils' thinking, and pupils articulate and justify their answers. Teachers' consistent approach supports pupils' retention of knowledge and skills very effectively.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning help them learn together well, share ideas and opinions and make strong progress. They respect the views of others without necessarily agreeing with them. They know their opinions are valued.
- Teachers plan effectively, making very good use of assessment information. All pupils are fully included, and pupils of all abilities are supported and challenged very effectively. As a result, all groups achieve well, including pupils who are disadvantaged, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and the most able pupils.
- Consistently strong phonics teaching enables pupils to read unfamiliar words with confidence. Pupils read well and widely. Older pupils read with increasing fluency and expression and develop good skills of comprehension, retrieval and inference. They talk with confidence about favourite authors and styles of writing.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have a range of experiences and activities to motivate and inspire their writing. This is effective for all pupils, and especially boys, who, last year, were not achieving as well as boys nationally. Pupils use their writing skills well to write for different purposes across the curriculum. Leaders continue to research ways in which to teach spelling most effectively.
- Mathematics is taught effectively. Pupils are taught mathematical reasoning skills, and they develop a depth of knowledge and understanding. Resources are used well in lessons. Pupils enjoy mathematics and the opportunities to practise skills in a variety of different contexts.
- The school's policy for feedback is used consistently across the school. Pupils say that this helps them know how to improve their work. They are clear about what they need to do to succeed, and teachers provide good models of excellence. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on learning and assess for themselves how well they think that they and others have done. They demonstrate a great level of maturity when commenting on others' achievements.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have created a happy, calm, secure and nurturing environment in which every pupil is valued and respected. Pupils love coming to school and have excellent attitudes to learning. A parent wrote: 'Both of my children are thriving and achieving so much, and the stories they tell me about their days shows how much they enjoy going to school and learning.'
- Pupils develop as exceptionally well-rounded individuals, and confident, self-assured and resilient learners. Pupils are welcoming and friendly, polite and respectful to each other and adults. They talk enthusiastically about their views and their aspirations.
- The school's seven values underpin everything that it does. They are promoted extremely effectively by staff and pupils and dovetail well with the school's Christian values and fundamental British values. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures, faiths and backgrounds that are different to their own.
- Pupils know that they are safe to learn without any type of discrimination as they know that any language or actions that may cause offence would not be tolerated. Pupils are very accepting and understanding of each other's differences.
- Pupils understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles through making choices about healthy eating and physical exercise. They also have a depth of understanding about how to secure a healthy mind. This is evident when pupils talk about thinking positively and helping others.
- Pupils say that bullying does not happen in school. They are very aware, however, that bullying can manifest itself in different ways, but that it is different from friends falling out. They are absolutely clear that any unkind behaviour is not acceptable. They are very confident that if any problems should arise, teachers would listen to them and help them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons, around the school and in the playground is exemplary.
- Staff set high standards to which pupils respond very well. Pupils know and understand the behaviour system and are very clear about what is expected. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils enjoy being with each other. Older pupils relish their role as play leaders. They take their responsibilities very seriously and make a difference, especially to younger pupils.
- Most pupils attend school regularly and are punctual to school. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. It has improved over the last two years and continues to do so in the current year. Leaders analyse attendance of different groups rigorously.

They have effective systems for identifying if any pupils are at risk of underachievement, and provide support for pupils and their families if this is the case. Leaders 'go the extra mile' to work with families where a pupil may be at risk of exclusion. Pupils are given the time and support they need to be successfully reintegrated back into class.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From starting points that are below and often well below those typical for their age when they start in the Reception Year, pupils make exceptionally strong progress throughout the school and achieve extremely well by the end of Year 6.
- For the previous two years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been above that found nationally. The school's information indicates that a higher proportion are on course to achieve the expected standard this year.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected attainment for their ages was above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils achieved well, particularly by the end of Year 6. The proportion reaching higher standards was considerably above the national average in reading and mathematics, as was the proportion reaching a greater depth in writing.
- The unvalidated information from the 2018 national assessments strongly reflects the quality of work seen in pupils' books and the school's assessment information. These indicate that standards are improving further and that all groups of pupils are making strong progress in all classes and in a range of subjects.
- Improvements are evident in pupils' books in their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities generally make strong progress from their starting points compared to other pupils nationally. This is because of the quality of the support that they receive, which is indicative of leaders' deeply held belief that all pupils should have an equal chance of success.
- Pupils' excellent personal skills, as well as their academic achievements, mean that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- Generally, children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are below that which is typical for their age, but this does vary from year to year. In the current year group, a greater proportion started well below the expectations for their age, particularly in reading.
- Children are given a good start and make good progress overall in the areas of learning. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is a little above that found nationally. There is a strong focus on communication, language and literacy skills. Children enjoy writing for a purpose. Children demonstrated this when

issuing boarding passes and baggage check-in slips in the 'airport' and writing cards to family members. Because of their starting points, reading is given a high priority and children make exceptionally strong progress in their early reading skills.

- Relationships between adults and children are trusting, and children feel safe and secure. There are good procedures to get to know the children and their families before they start school, and good relationships with parents continue throughout the early years. Children are happy to come to school and settle quickly into the routines of the day. They listen well to adults and behave very well. They are well prepared to continue as learners in Year 1.
- Good teaching and learning ensures that children experience a varied and exciting range of activities. Adults make effective use of questioning to support children's language development and to help them understand new concepts.
- Leadership in the early years is outstanding. The high aspirations for children are evident as soon as they start school. There is a strong emphasis on developing a nurturing, caring and challenging environment and inclusion for all. The quality of provision is rigorously monitored to see what might be improved. Individual needs are identified quickly. There are clear plans to review the assessment procedures to ensure that there is greater precision in using information to identify the next steps in children's learning.

School details

Unique reference number	141220
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10046590

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Colyer
Headteacher	Hannah Tudor
Telephone number	01795 532 496
Website	smcschool.co.uk
Email address	htudor@smc.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school became an academy in August 2015. It is sponsored within the Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust (Aquila).
- The board of directors of the trust delegate governance responsibility to the local governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes and examined work in pupils' books. Most observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, talked to pupils about their learning, and listened to some pupils read. They observed pupils at lunchtime, in the playground, during an assembly and during their sports day.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Meetings were held with governors, and the chief executive officer and a school improvement adviser of the trust.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including: leaders' checks on the school's performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 17 free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the day. Inspectors took account of 19 responses to the staff survey and nine responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Barney Geen

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