

St Mary's Catholic Primary

Cross Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4ST

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have established an ethos of high expectations. Staff, pupils, parents and carers are passionate about the school and are determined for it to be the best it can be.
- The senior leadership team has a clear plan for improvement. The leaders are providing professional development for staff to support school improvements across the school.
- The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to learn across all subjects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength and is at the heart of all the school does.
- Governors are ambitious for the school. They provide effective support for the new leadership team.
- Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. The school's well-being team works tirelessly to ensure that pupils are cared for and safe.
- Pupils and parents understand the importance of regular attendance. The well-being team provides support for families when attendance falls below the school's expectations.
- The proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2 are similar to or above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve. They use their secure subject knowledge to deepen and develop pupils' knowledge.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and contribute to an environment where pupils are confident to have a go even if they make mistakes.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and respectful of others. Pupils practise 'mindfulness' to help them understand their thoughts and emotions.
- Children in the early years are keen to learn new things. Leaders have ensured that activities provide focus on developing children's characteristics of learning.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils can do carefully enough to set tasks that match their needs. Tasks can be too easy or too hard for a few pupils.
- The use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. Sometimes they support the development of pupils' learning well. However, on occasion they are less active in supporting learners.
- Middle leaders are keen to develop their subject or area; however, they have not had time to demonstrate their impact.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers use their knowledge of what pupils can do to set tasks that match their needs
 - teaching assistants are used effectively to develop pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing the role of middle leaders to enable them to have a more significant role in improving their subject or area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new leadership team has quickly evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development. Its members have set in motion effective school development plans to continue the drive for improvement across the school. They have ensured that staff are involved in all aspects of school improvement.
- Since September 2018, the leadership team has implemented several changes. These include the introduction of different approaches to developing pupils' learning across the curriculum, a revised approach to providing pupils with feedback and the organisation of subject responsibilities. There is passion and commitment from all staff for the school to improve further.
- The senior leadership team have a rigorous and clear programme in place for monitoring their drive for improvement. They are evaluating the impact of their actions with greater clarity and are using this information more sharply to further develop the practice of teachers and teaching assistants.
- Leaders prioritise professional development for staff. Training aligns with the school's plans for development and bespoke training is provided to support the individual practice of staff. Newly qualified teachers receive effective support to enable them to develop their skills well.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium grant. There is a range of well-evaluated and costed strategies in place to support these pupils. Leaders are determined that the needs of these pupils are well met.
- The leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has a secure understanding of the needs of these pupils. Specific and carefully designed support is provided to ensure that pupils are able to access learning in their class. Support provided for pupils is appropriate to their needs and attainment.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a clear strategy for the development of mathematics across the school. They have a secure understanding of how the quality of teaching and learning is impacting on the progress that pupils are making. Leaders carry out regular monitoring and, from this, provide staff with appropriate professional development and support.
- In English, leaders have identified the aspects which they need to develop across the school. Actions taken have improved the quality of teaching, particularly in writing. However, there is still more that leaders wish to do to develop this area further. Their actions have not yet had time to fully impact upon the quality of the teaching of writing.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to learn across all subjects. The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength. Pupils learn what it means to be a British citizen, including older pupils having a comprehensive understanding of democracy in the United Kingdom. Extra-curricular activities are used well to support pupils' well-rounded learning. They are provided with opportunities to learn an instrument,

participate in residential visits and to develop their spiritual selves.

- Leaders have ensured that the physical education (PE) and sport premium is used effectively and has increased the participation in physical exercise across the school. Staff have received specialist training to develop their skills in teaching PE.
- The leadership team has rightly identified that subject leadership requires development. Specific subject leaders are very new to their posts and are enthusiastic about developing their subject or area. They have completed audits to ensure that their curriculum areas are covered across the school. However, they have not yet had time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subject across the school.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has maintained the focus on stability and consistency during the recent change in leadership at the school. Governors have ensured that the appointment of the new headteacher has had as little impact as possible on the life of the school. The governing body provides essential support for the school's staff, pupils and parents.
- Governors are passionate and determined to provide pupils with the best possible opportunities. Members of the governing body are assigned to classes and subjects allowing them to have a focused view of the life of the school and of the experiences that pupils receive.
- Governors have high ambitions for pupils and have a comprehensive understanding of how well pupils are performing. However, occasionally, governors have not looked sharply enough at the progress pupils make in all key stages.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher and the designated safeguarding leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of different pupils and families. Through the school's well-being team, leaders have ensured that there is appropriate support for pupils and families. The school's family support worker and counsellor work closely with external agencies including the school nurse to provide tailored support for families.
- Families receive bespoke support when required. Staff do not shy away from helping families, some in very difficult circumstances. Staff are passionate and go above and beyond expectations to ensure that pupils are well looked after and are safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff have a secure understanding of their safeguarding obligations, including an awareness of recent or local issues. Weekly safeguarding briefings and scenarios provide staff with regular prompts and guidance about what to do in certain situations. Staff follow up concerns swiftly and incidents are tracked carefully and outcomes recorded.
- Safeguarding information provided for parents is comprehensive and provides appropriate advice, signposting where to seek help or support if required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan lessons with the highest outcomes in mind. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and generally use this effectively to develop pupils' understanding.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' thinking and help them to develop their ideas. Relationships between staff and pupils are caring and conducive to creating an environment where pupils are confident to take risks, try things out and to sometimes make mistakes.
- In mathematics, pupils complete pre- and post-assessment tasks which provide teachers with a secure understanding of what pupils need to learn. Most of the time teachers use this information effectively to plan learning tasks that closely match pupils' next steps. 'Stretch it' tasks are available once pupils have completed set tasks. These help to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Teachers are effective in developing pupils' reading skills. Teachers use quality texts to develop pupils' wider knowledge within a subject area and provide additional context when required. For example, pupils in Year 6 were reading 'Trash' by Andy Mulligan; pupils were able to draw on their previous learning about slavery and their knowledge of other countries and cultures to enhance their understanding of the story.
- To develop pupils' writing skills, teachers provide pupils with examples and often demonstrate how to write with different styles of writing. The teaching of pupils' grammar and punctuation skills is woven into English lessons, so pupils understand how these can be used in their own writing.
- Currently, teachers provide pupils with close guidance on what to write and how to structure their writing. Teachers have recognised that sometimes pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their own writing style and independence in their writing. Leaders are strengthening this aspect of teaching pupils writing skills. However, strategies to develop these have not been fully embedded across the school.
- Occasionally, teachers are not using their knowledge of what pupils can do carefully enough to set tasks that meet pupils' needs. Sometimes, pupils complete tasks they can already do and are not moved on quickly with their learning. Conversely, occasionally teachers do not adapt tasks for some pupils and the work they are asked to complete is too difficult.
- The use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. Most of the time, teaching assistants are utilised highly effectively. They support pupils skilfully and are an integral part of pupils' learning. They work collaboratively with teachers to ensure that pupils make strong progress. However, on occasion teaching assistants do not contribute effectively or address misconceptions to develop pupils' learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Members of the school's well-being team work well together to support the needs of pupils. Staff quickly identify pupils' needs and through the collaboration between the school's counsellor, the school nurse and teaching staff, pupils receive the support they need to thrive. This includes support with bereavement, anxiety and coping with family break-up.
- Recently, the school has experienced significant events that have been challenging for staff, pupils and parents. All staff have managed this with compassion and empathy. Pupils have received support appropriate to their needs, which has enabled them to understand their emotions and has helped them to cope during a very difficult time.
- Parents are highly complimentary of the support that pupils receive.
- Pupils are thoughtful and caring citizens who are keen to participate in the wider life of the school and the community. They value the school's 'sacred space' which provides them with a quiet place for reflection. The 'pupil chaplaincy team' ensures that the space is always a tidy and calm place to be.
- Learning heroes encourage positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, pupils demonstrate resilience and are keen to learn. They work well collaboratively and are respectful of the views of others, including when they differ from their own.
- Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and how to stay healthy. Pupils can evaluate whether they are making healthy food choices. They talk confidently about the need for a balanced diet and appreciate the healthy choices that are available to them at lunchtime.
- Staff have ensured that pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know the risks when using modern technology. Older pupils performed a play to younger pupils to emphasise the possible dangers of online gaming and social media.
- Pupils have a secure overview of the dangers they may face outside of school. For example, they can explain with confidence what they would do if approached by a stranger and the procedures they would use when crossing roads.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are extremely polite and courteous. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils emulate this in all that they do. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They welcome visitors with a smile or a greeting. They frequently hold doors for others and treat each other with respect and consideration.
- During lessons, incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour are rare. All staff follow the school procedures for monitoring behaviour. Incidents of undesirable behaviour are

logged by staff enabling leaders to have a clear understanding of incidents and patterns.

- Staff support pupils who struggle to manage their emotions exceptionally well. Leaders are determined to provide the very few pupils who struggle to regulate their behaviour with strategies to practise self-discipline. Staff help pupils to recognise their emotional triggers to know when to use taught breathing techniques or take 'time out'. Pupils say these techniques are very helpful and have helped them to understand and manage their emotions.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have ensured that parents fully understand the need for pupils to attend. The well-being team quickly identifies when pupils' attendance begins to fall. Its members work closely with families, including carrying out home visits to encourage good attendance and to help eliminate the reasons for pupils not attending school. For example, leaders have developed a relationship with a local taxi firm to collect families to get pupils into school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected and the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Pupils made stronger progress than pupils nationally. The school's own assessment information indicates that this pattern of attainment is similar for other cohorts currently in key stage 2.
- An increasing proportion of pupils are achieving the school's age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics across most of key stage 2. Pupils' workbooks show that most pupils are making strong progress. However, where tasks are not sharply matched to pupils' next steps, a few pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- In key stage 1, pupils make secure progress from their starting points at the end of the early years. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard was similar to the national average in writing and was above in reading and mathematics in 2018. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading and mathematics is below the national average. Pupils' workbooks show that most pupils make secure progress in Years 1 and 2. However, as in key stage 2, where tasks do not securely match pupils' next steps some pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been falling slightly for the past three years and was just below the national average in 2018. However, leaders have evaluated the quality of teaching of phonics and are closely monitoring the progress made by all pupils in phonics. Pupils who read with inspectors used phonetic strategies effectively in their reading.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have carefully evaluated the quality of teaching and learning in the early years. They have identified where additional support has been needed and have provided appropriate staff training to develop teachers' skills.

- Children are inquisitive and ready to learn. They relish many of the exciting and purposeful activities that are provided for them. Teachers make sure that activities provided help to develop children’s characteristics of learning.
- Children are purposeful in their play. Once they have chosen an activity they complete tasks or develop their play to sustain their interest. Most of the time, adults support children’s learning effectively and pose questions or prompts to develop children’s thinking.
- Adults develop children’s learning around their interests and help them to make links to other areas of learning. For example, children were excited to discover that ice had formed in the outdoor area overnight. The teaching assistant responded to children’s enthusiasm over this discovery and encouraged them to consider how the ice had formed and why.
- Leaders have ensured that there are effective links between home and school. Parents are encouraged to share ‘wow’ moments with teachers so that these can contribute towards evidence of children’s learning journeys. Events outside of school are shared through the school’s teddy who goes on adventures with children when it visits their homes.
- Many children join the school with levels of development typical for their age. They make secure progress through the early years and the proportion of pupils leaving with a good level of development is in line with the national average.
- Assessment systems are thorough and are generally used effectively to provide appropriate activities to target children’s next steps in learning. Occasionally, this information is not used sharply enough to ensure that adults target what some children need to do next to develop their skills. For example, activities to develop fine motor skills were available for children, yet some children who needed to develop this aspect did not participate.
- Occasionally, teaching assistants are not utilised as effectively as they could be. On occasion, their participation in activities is not planned carefully enough for them to provide appropriate support for pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	112898
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10057661

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

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	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Findlay
Headteacher	Nicola Brown
Telephone number	01246 232 170
Website	www.st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk
Email address	info@st-marys.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018

Information about this school

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are new to their roles from September 2018.
- This is a Roman Catholic school. The last section 48 inspection took place on 1 April 2014.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a number of lessons, some of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. They observed the teaching of early reading skills and listened to pupils read. The inspectors also talked with pupils about their school and looked at examples of pupils' work to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors also considered the 28 responses to the staff survey. The inspectors spoke with the local authority senior adviser and partner headteacher.
- The inspectors spoke with parents informally and considered the 196 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement; the most recent information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; and the most recent data relating to the attendance of pupils.
- The inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.

Inspection team

Helen Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Di Mullan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Phil Garnham	Her Majesty's Inspector

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