

Inspection of St Mary's Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Oakfield Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 7LX

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Primary is a welcoming school where pupils, parents and carers, and staff feel valued. The school is an exciting place to learn. It has close links with the community. Each year, the school choir sings in a local care home and pupils make masks for the Bridgwater Carnival.

The headteacher leads the school well. Staff and governors are firmly committed to preparing pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for life. Staff plan interesting activities for pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning.

Adults expect pupils to try their best. Staff encourage pupils to learn from their 'magical mistakes'. Pupils know it is important to try hard, even when learning is difficult.

Adults care deeply about pupils and provide extra help when they need it. For example, pupils enjoy taking Pepe the dog for a walk when they are feeling nervous or sad. Parents appreciate the school's support.

Pupils are polite and sociable. They love school and take pride in their work. Pupils know how to take responsibility for their actions and behave well. Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated. They care for each other and are respectful to adults.

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

Leaders are effective in building pupils' knowledge and skills in different subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. This helps to make sure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils get off to a flying start in reading. Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading as soon as children start school. Teachers are well trained to make sure that pupils learn how to read in the right order. Pupils' books help them to practise the sounds that they are learning. This supports pupils to read well. Pupils are well supported to develop a love of reading and have a wide selection of books to choose from. Pupils delight in listening to stories such as 'Ariki and the Giant Shark'. Teachers read enthusiastically so that pupils are keen to find out what happens next.

Pupils who find learning difficult, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are usually well supported to catch up. However, some support is not planned well enough to help pupils learn.

Adults have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils work hard. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not challenging enough to ensure that pupils learn well.

The wealth of experiences offered by the school sparks pupils' enthusiasm. They enjoy meeting the Kenyan choir and Chinese students who visit Bridgwater. Pupils

also visit the local mosque and write to penfriends in France. This enables them to find out about different faiths and cultures.

Leaders and teachers work closely with parents to support their children's learning. Parents are very appreciative of this. A parent commented, 'The headteacher and staff are amazing!'

Governors are very committed to the school and praise the headteacher's leadership. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths. They are fully aware that the curriculum needs further development.

We enjoyed visiting the Nursery and Reception classes. Adults form caring relationships with children. Children listen carefully and behave well. The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is effective and children achieve well. Children are provided with exciting opportunities to explore and find things out. They enjoy racing around on bikes, painting and making models out of modelling clay and twigs. They also love listening to stories. Teachers plan learning to develop and deepen the children's understanding in different subjects. However, there are times when activities limit how well the children can do.

Leaders and teachers understand the importance of developing the curriculum, but the school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects, such as history, science and religious education. However, leaders are already taking the right steps to bring about the improvements needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise pupils' safety. They carry out the correct checks on staff before they start work at the school. Pupils feel safe at school. They say that adults look after them well. Pupils know that they can talk to staff if they are worried or upset. Pupils take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Older pupils enjoy taking on roles, such as those of e-cadets to teach others how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although the school's curriculum is well developed in reading, writing and mathematics, it is not developed well enough in subjects such as history, religious education and science. This leads to gaps in some pupils' knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are well planned to build pupils' knowledge and understanding in readiness for the next stage in their learning.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	123784
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10111526
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	466
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nichola Bown
Headteacher	Morwenna Dunstan
Website	www.stmarysbridgwater.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 September 2014

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school has a nursery.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the school's previous inspection in April 2018.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below that of the same pupils nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below that of similar pupils nationally.
- A statutory inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) was conducted in July 2015. The religious character of the school was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held several meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. We also had meetings with other leaders, including the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). I met with a group of governors. I also had separate meetings with a representative from the diocese and the school improvement partner.
- The inspection focused deeply on reading, mathematics, science and religious education. We also reviewed the history curriculum. We met subject leaders and jointly reviewed pupils' work. We spoke to pupils and teachers about learning. I enjoyed listening to younger pupils read. All other subjects were considered as part of the inspection.
- We reviewed leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. We checked attendance information, behaviour logs and safeguarding records. We held discussions with senior leaders about safeguarding.
- We spoke informally with pupils and observed their behaviour at different times of the day, including at break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met several parents as they brought their children to school. We reviewed 51 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 27 additional free-text comments. We also considered responses to the school's recent parent survey. We took account of 28 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Catherine Beeks, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bradley Murray	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy French	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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