

Inspection of St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School

Spring Street, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 3EF

Inspection dates: 13–14 November 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?

This is a highly inclusive, multicultural school, where pupils mix well together. Leaders have created a culture of care where all children are welcomed and embraced. Staff build great relationships with pupils and their parents and carers. Leaders ensure that everything is done to help new families and to make them feel part of the school community.

Leaders promote high academic and pastoral ambitions for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They believe there are no limits or ceiling on what any pupil can achieve and actively seek out the best support for pupils to enable them to succeed.

Pupils are happy and value their education. Leaders ensure that pupils are learning to be respectful, tolerant and knowledgeable citizens. Older pupils are good role models for younger pupils and take on many responsibilities.

Most pupils behave well. They work and play together harmoniously. Those pupils who find concentrating difficult are usually supported well.

Pupils say they feel safe and that there is no bullying. If it did happen, pupils are confident that staff would deal with it straight away. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when accessing the internet.

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

Children get off to a good start in the Reception and Nursery Years. Adults are caring and work closely together as a team to meet children's needs. This helps children to make a happy, settled start to school. Teachers give priority to developing children's language skills as many start school speaking little English. Staff are enthusiastic and foster children's enjoyment of learning, including reading. Well-designed activities interest children and spark their curiosity. For example, during the inspection, children were absorbed in pouring glitter water between jugs, working carefully together to learn about measuring.

Leaders prioritise reading well. Pupils are taught phonics in a sensible order and develop their reading skills progressively. However, many pupils come and go at different times in the school year, often at short notice, with many new pupils having little spoken English or experience of school. Any pupils who enter the school mid-year or who fall behind get specialist help to catch up with developing their early reading skills. Pupils enjoy reading for themselves and listening to a variety of texts read aloud by teachers who read with passion and enthusiasm.

Many areas of the curriculum are logically planned and well delivered. The school's plans for reading and writing, mathematics, religious education and art are especially well thought out. In these subjects, teachers plan activities that build well on pupils' previous learning. This is helping pupils to know and remember more.

This is particularly clear in mathematics, where pupils build up their mathematical confidence and skills over time. However, some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics are not always high enough. In a few instances, the activities planned for pupils do not provide appropriate challenge.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience a broad and interesting curriculum. Leaders have made a good start in reviewing and updating the curriculum, with work to develop history and science well under way. Some subjects are yet to be revisited. Leaders have this planned out at a sensible pace to make sure that the reviews are thorough and do not cause unnecessary workload for staff.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils are polite and have good relationships with each other and adults. Staff understand pupils' additional needs, including disadvantaged pupils, those who speak English as an additional language, and those with SEND. Staff are given specialist advice, extra support and resources so that these pupils can learn alongside their classmates. Most of the time, staff help these pupils to take part in lessons successfully.

Teachers capitalise on the diverse population of the school to help pupils to learn in depth about other cultures, beliefs and customs. The school actively seeks to engage all parents in the life of the school and in supporting pupils' education. Staff carefully use the local area to enhance the curriculum. For example, classes make the short walk to the beach to learn first-hand about the environment.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer to them. There are many opportunities for pupils to engage in activities outside school, along with pupils from other schools. Pupils raise awareness and funds for many different causes and are very proud of the 'thank you' messages on display.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders recognise the challenges faced by pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, and take steps to ensure that the safety and welfare of children are given a high priority. They have strong processes in place and ensure that the information they receive is acted upon quickly. Staff are well trained on all aspects of safeguarding and know how and when to report any concerns about a child's welfare.

Although staff are vigilant and pupils are kept safe, some records and policies are not updated as well as they might be.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have used the national curriculum to create new plans for teaching science, history, art and religious education. Learning in these subjects is being linked together by a coherent sequence of knowledge, skills and vocabulary. Leaders need to make sure that staff are given the support, time and training necessary to implement these new plans and to develop other foundation subjects.
- A small number of teachers do not always plan activities that are challenging enough, particularly in mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what all pupils, regardless of their ability, can achieve.

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	114541
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10122219
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Margaret McHugh and Kate Fryer
Headteacher	Andrea Wilson
Website	www.stmarymags.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com/
Date of previous inspection	11–12 May 2016

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic school.
- The school had a section 48 inspection of denominational education in June 2019.
- The headteacher took up her position in January 2017. The deputy headteacher took up her position in September 2017.
- There are two co-chairs of the governing body who took up their positions in July 2019.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- 58% of pupils speak English as an additional language. This is significantly above the national average.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held a wide range of meetings during this inspection including with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the school business

manager, and governors.

- We met with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the diocese.
- We took account of 24 responses to Ofsted’s Parent View survey and 21 free-text comments. We also took account of 15 responses to the staff survey. No pupils responded to the pupil survey.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and art. We met with leaders of these subjects, visited lessons, looked at teachers’ planning, heard pupils read, talked to teachers and pupils, and looked at work in books.
- We checked the school’s record of recruitment checks for adults in the school. We met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss safeguarding. We looked at some records of incidents reported by staff and the subsequent actions carried out.

Inspection team

Marcia Goodwin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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