

# Inspection of a good school: St Mary's CofE Primary School, Amersham

School Lane, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP7 0EL

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Inspection dates:

15–16 January 2020

## **Outcome**

St Mary's CofE Primary School, Amersham continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say they feel safe. They attend regularly. They show curiosity in their lessons, soaking up the knowledge and skills they learn through a broad and interesting curriculum. The local area often features in pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy their trips to the local museum, for example, to find out about what life was like in the past.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Pupils follow the school's four rules and embrace the Christian ethos. They are kind to one another and get on well. One child told me, 'Everyone is just the same but in different ways.' Bullying is extremely rare.

Leaders have struck a balance of high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour, while being caring and supportive towards all pupils. They often go the extra mile to ensure that those who need support receive it in a timely way. Pupils feel well looked after.

Pupils embrace opportunities to take on leadership roles or become monitors. Playground buddies and sports leaders make sure that pupils are happy in the playground and that there is plenty to do.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils in this school. They expect pupils to behave and achieve well, and most pupils do. This means there are very few interruptions to their learning. Staff support pupils' wider development well. There are many opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to contribute to school life. Elected school councillors organise charity events and work within the local community. Others volunteer to take on roles such as helping in the dining room at lunchtime. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, take part in a range of activities outside the school day.

Leaders expect pupils to leave this school with a wealth of knowledge gained from a range of reading. All pupils, including pupils with SEND, enjoy learning and performing a poem each term, for example. Pupils read a wide range of books well. They were keen to tell me about the stories they have heard and those that they are reading.

Most pupils meet the requirements of the Year 1 national screening check in phonics. In Reception and Year 1, a small minority of pupils fall behind. This is because the teaching and the choice of books do not match well enough the sounds they need to learn. This means they struggle to read fluently. These pupils are given additional teaching to catch up. Most pupils are fluent readers by the end of key stage 2.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. They are keen to apply their knowledge and solve problems. Resources have been well selected by leaders to support teaching. Learning is organised so that it builds on what has been learned before. Teachers check what pupils know and remember before they move learning on. Pupils in key stage 2 select their own level of challenge within lessons. Teachers check this to make sure that work is challenging enough for each pupil. Small-group teaching is available for pupils who need extra support to keep up. Pupils say this makes them feel more confident in their lessons.

In the other subjects pupils learn, leaders are knowledgeable about the curriculum areas they lead. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum pupils study is ambitious and relevant to all pupils. They have planned out the skills pupils will learn. However, these long-term plans are not specific enough about the knowledge pupils are expected to learn. This means that, in some curriculum subjects, pupils' knowledge is not well established.

Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. They receive helpful support. Learning activities are adapted to meet their needs so that they can fully take part in lessons. This means that pupils with SEND begin to catch up with their peers, whether this be academically or socially.

In the early years, adults plan learning to encourage children's curiosity and to help children understand the world around them. Clear routines support the children to know what is expected of them and to enjoy success. Children enjoy listening to stories that excite and interest them. This helps them learn and use new words. The curriculum is well planned to develop children's understanding of early number. The adults know the children well. They skilfully move their learning on through well-planned activities.

Staff well-being is important to school leaders. They are mindful of how to keep workload manageable and look for ways to do this. Staff feel well supported. One member of staff told me, 'It's never "let's do something more; it's let's do things differently"'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders have established clear procedures for reporting and recording concerns. These are acted on in a timely way, referred on when needed and followed up.

The safeguarding lead is tenacious in ensuring that the support needed for families is accessed quickly.

Staff are trained to spot the signs and symptoms of abuse. They are alert to safeguarding concerns relevant to this community. Staff know to refer even the smallest detail, as they know this could be part of a bigger 'jigsaw' for a child.

The right checks are in place to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders, including subject leaders, have reviewed the curriculum. A broad overview of the skills to be taught in each subject has been planned and sequenced in a logical way. However, the knowledge pupils are expected to acquire has not yet been mapped out clearly. Curriculum leaders need to continue their work in mapping the skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn as they progress through the school. Leaders should evaluate the impact of this curriculum on pupils' learning so that they are confident that it results in pupils knowing and remembering more as they progress.
- The teaching of phonics and the choice of reading books are not matched well enough to lower-attaining pupils' reading skills. As a result, some pupils struggle to read with fluency. Leaders need to make sure that early reading books and the teaching of phonics are better matched to pupils' developing reading skills in order to support good progress in reading for all.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 26 September 2011.

## 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 are the school and you are 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110455
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122261
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	336
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Claire Hayes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Hills
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysce.bucks.sch.uk">www.stmarysce.bucks.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 June 2016

## Information about this school

- St Mary's CofE Primary School, Amersham is a Church of England school. The school was graded outstanding in the last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) on 7 October 2016. The next SIAMS inspection is due in 2021.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and other staff.
- I met with the chair of governors and seven other governors. I spoke with representatives of the local authority and the Oxford Diocese by telephone.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I also spoke to pupils during lunchtime to gain their views of the school.
- I checked the school's safeguarding procedures. This was done through reviewing documentation, including behaviour and bullying records, and speaking with leaders, staff and pupils.
- I read 160 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 159 written comments. I also considered 18 comments from staff who completed Ofsted's survey.

- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. This involved visits to lessons with school leaders. I spoke to pupils and teachers, reviewed pupils' work and listened to pupils reading with a familiar adult.

### **Inspection team**

Clare Haines, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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