

# Inspection of a good school: St Martin's Catholic Primary School

Pendennis Avenue, Caversham Park Village, Reading, Berkshire RG4 6SS

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Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

## Outcome

St Martin's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

St Martin's Catholic Primary School is a happy school where pupils love to sing. During the inspection, all pupils from Reception to Year 6 were practising a three-part harmony. They held their parts well, obviously enjoying the challenge.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils and staff alike. Pupils enjoy school life, including the daily mile. They say that it helps them 'release energy and concentrate better.' Pupils work hard in lessons and want to learn more. Year 6 pupils speak with pride about the school tradition of earning their ties through proving they were responsible. Older pupils love helping younger pupils now bubbles have ceased.

Pupils feel safe and happy at St Martin's. They care for each other in their actions and words. Pupils comment on how friendly the school is. Bullying and the use of derogatory language is not tolerated. Pupils know to speak out if bullying does happen, saying, 'My teacher said it's not snitching, it's self-care'.

Parents are highly complimentary about the school, saying that leaders have 'created a close-knit, cohesive community, where pupils thrive'.

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

Leaders are ambitious that the curriculum is as well planned as it can be to meet the needs of St Martin's pupils. They know what could be even better. Leaders have thought carefully about curriculum planning in most subjects. Teachers have a precise understanding of what knowledge and skills they need to teach and in what order. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders are not quite as far ahead with curriculum planning as they wanted to be.

Computing and languages need some further refinement to reach the same level of precision and thought as other subjects. Leaders have made a strong start in carefully linking learning and experiences in the early years curriculum to future learning. However,

this piece of work is not yet finished and new learning does not always build on what children know and can do.

Leaders have strengthened teachers' subject knowledge so that teachers teach the curriculum well. For example, a recent staff meeting run by a local secondary science department focused on states of matter. This has made sure that teachers teach concepts such as freezing and evaporation even more effectively.

Pupils love reading. They talk eagerly about the books they have read or listened to. Story time is a daily event at St Martin's and pupils look forward to it. Leaders have planned the reading curriculum well, including for children in the early years. They view phonics as 'the root to reading'. Leaders have prioritised training for staff in this area and recently introduced a new phonics programme. Teachers teach phonics and reading well. Children in Reception quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Pupils who are in the early stages of reading get lots of practice, focused exactly on what they need.

Mathematics is also taught well. Teachers are clear about the sequences of learning that they want pupils to understand. They know possible misconceptions and watch out for them well in lessons. They swiftly spot pupils who need extra practice to understand new ideas. Pupils spoke about how well teachers are helping them catch up with any learning they may have missed during the pandemic.

Staff know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. They identify needs early, using external support when needed. In English and mathematics, teachers adapt lessons well for pupils with SEND. However, this is not always the case in other subjects. Teachers do not always understand well enough how to adjust learning for pupils with SEND in subjects such as history and science. They sometimes make it too complicated.

Pupils behave very well in class and the playgrounds. Staff make sure that the school's values and virtues are meaningful to pupils. For example, pupils learn how being 'eloquent' helps leaders be elected but being 'truthful' helps you to be a good leader. Pupils write their manifestos for school council with integrity.

The school is well led and managed. Governors are ambitious for the pupils in the school. They know the strengths and next steps so they ask the right questions of leaders. They validate what leaders tell them through visiting the school, talking to pupils and making good use of local authority reports.

Staff enjoy working at St Martin's. They say that leaders are supportive, solution-focused and considerate of their workload.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained. They take their safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. They know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Recent training on peer-on-peer abuse has made sure that staff know how to recognise possible warning signs.

Leaders keep meticulous records. They work well with other agencies to get the right support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Governors check that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose by speaking to staff and pupils. They scrutinise records to make sure that all necessary checks have been done on adults who work or volunteer in the school.

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

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

- The curriculum is not as well planned in computing and languages as in other subjects. This hinders teachers' ability to plan learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do in these subjects. Leaders should continue to refine the computing and languages subject plans to ensure that pupils' learning, from early years to Year 6, is consistently and coherently sequenced, setting out the exact progression of knowledge and skills.
- Sometimes, teachers do not adapt lessons well enough for pupils with SEND, in subjects other than English and mathematics. This means that pupils with SEND do not learn as effectively as they could in all subjects. Leaders should make sure that teachers know appropriate strategies to support learning for pupils with SEND across all subjects.

## 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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>	110038
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200363
<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>	154
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Lucy Ring
<b>Headteacher</b>	Erika Kirwan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmartinscaversham.co.uk">www.stmartinscaversham.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic Primary School.
- St Martin's Catholic Primary School is in a federation with St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Caversham. They share a governing body.
- There have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school since the last inspection. The headteacher took up her post in April 2019. The deputy head teacher took up her role in September 2020.
- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by the Archdiocese of Birmingham, in May 2017.
- The school currently makes use of one alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. She met with three governors, including the vice chair of the governing body.
- Phone calls were held with representatives from the local authority and the Archdiocese of Birmingham.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils. The inspector heard pupils read to an adult from the school.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. This included safer recruitment checks and record-keeping of serious concerns, as well as speaking to pupils and staff.
- The inspector also gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour on learning, the school's wider curriculum offer and how well leaders support staff with their workload.
- Responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and free-text comments were considered by the inspector. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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