

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast

Buckfast Road, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0EA

Inspection dates:

17 November 2021

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Buckfast continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school, and rightly so. They get on well together and enjoy being with their friends. One pupil's view, shared by many, was: 'I do not like holidays because I miss school too much.' Pupils attend school regularly and rarely miss a day. All parents and carers who completed Ofsted's survey would recommend the school.

Equality is at the core of the school's curriculum. Leaders have high ambitions for every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no barriers to success in the eyes of leaders. This ambitious culture permeates the school.

Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are adamant that bullying does not occur. Pupils said that if it did occur, they would not stand back and let it happen. They are confident that staff would deal with any bullying. Pupils said that experiences such as anti-bullying week have helped them to learn right from wrong.

Pupils have many responsibilities and opportunities. Some older pupils run lunchtime clubs for younger pupils. Pupils are grateful for these experiences. Leaders put pupils' well-being at the forefront of their decision-making.

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

The headteacher, ably supported by her staff, has maintained a good standard of education since the previous inspection. Staff and parents are unanimous in their support of the leadership of the school.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND learn well. Staff provide them with effective support. Most pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable. Governors regularly check the impact of leaders' work to ensure that all pupils get a high-quality education. They provide appropriate challenge and support for leaders and staff.

Most subjects are well planned to help pupils remember important knowledge. Likewise, the curriculum in the early years prepares children well for Year 1. Nevertheless, in some

subjects, the curriculum is not as well organised as it could be. For example, in geography, some older pupils are not able to remember key learning. This is because the content is not as specific as it needs to be. This hampers their ability to complete more complex learning later on. Leaders recognise this and are implementing a new geography curriculum. However, their plans for improvement have been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders prioritise reading. It is the backbone of the curriculum. Following a review of the teaching of early reading, leaders took swift action to implement a new curriculum. Staff have embraced the new approach. This is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to read well. Staff waste no time in teaching children in the early years how to read. Children in the Nursery class learn about famous people through carefully chosen books that underpin the curriculum. This leads them to have a thirst for learning and a desire to know more. As soon as children are ready, they learn how to recognise sounds and use these to help them to read and write. The very few pupils who fall behind have effective support that is helping them to catch up quickly. However, once pupils have secured the necessary knowledge to be able to read, the curriculum is not as well thought out. This is because leaders have not considered well enough what they want pupils to know by the end of each year.

Pupils learn important knowledge about life in modern Britain. They know about the need to respect everyone, regardless of their faith or culture. Leaders plan experiences carefully so that pupils learn about equality. For instance, they joined a 'Fair Trade' conference remotely, to listen to the challenges faced by a banana farmer. Pupils do much voluntary work in the community. For example, they support the elderly and complete beach cleans in the local area.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Leaders ensure that as soon as children start in the Nursery class, they develop strong behaviour routines. This sets them up well for learning in key stage 1. The school is calm, and lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils are respectful to one another and to adults.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular, up-to-date training. All staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Procedures for recruiting staff to work in the school are robust. Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that any pupil who needs additional support receives it. Leaders are persistent, and they secure the support that pupils and their families need.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. They know how to stay safe online, including when using mobile technology.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading curriculum needs to be strengthened further. Leaders have not considered well enough what pupils need to know by the end of each year group. As a result, some pupils do not always reach their full potential. Leaders need to ensure that the content of the key stage 2 reading curriculum is well thought out.
- Some curriculum plans are not as well organised as they need to be. These plans do not consider well enough the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. This leads to some pupils not understanding subject content as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that they develop their curriculum plans so that all pupils know more and remember more.

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/outstanding. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2016.

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

Unique reference number	140774
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10210972
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Nicholls
Headteacher	Nicola Slack
Website	www.st-marysrc.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- The school received its last section 48 inspection of church schools in June 2016. Although another inspection is due, the school has been informed that this will not be before 2024, due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and took that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, trust leaders, curriculum leaders, and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors virtually, including the chair of the governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation relating to attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding records, tested the staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also took into consideration the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Donna Briggs

Her Majesty's Inspector

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