

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Woodside Way, Kings Heath, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN5 7HX

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is a nurturing and inclusive school. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They attend well and wear their uniforms with pride. Pupils feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are learning online.

Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy. This has not yet improved the behaviour of some pupils. Not all pupils behave well in and around the school. Where lessons are less engaging, pupils sometimes lose concentration. Some pupils fidget and chat when the teachers are talking. This means they get less learning completed than they should. Pupils say that bullying sometimes happens. When it does happen, pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with by adults.

Many pupils have leadership roles. They relish taking on extra responsibilities, such as head boy and girl, eco-warriors, librarians and school councillors. One pupil told inspectors it gives them a 'sense of belonging'. Pupils take part in a range of clubs, including football, ukulele, dance and gymnastics.

Leaders are ambitious about what pupils can and should achieve. Leaders are making changes to improve the quality of education. However, these have not yet had enough impact on broadening and deepening pupils' knowledge within subjects and across the curriculum as intended.

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

Leaders, staff, governors and trustees want all pupils to do well. Leaders have recently designed a curriculum plan which is well sequenced. There is more to do, however, to improve pupils' learning. The newness of the curriculum means that what leaders want to see in the classroom is not always happening. For example, in mathematics, teachers do not always check or assess that pupils have a secure understanding of prior knowledge and skills before teaching the next steps in the sequence of learning. This means that pupils do not learn as effectively as they should. In key stage 2, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is because previous plans did not identify precisely what leaders wanted pupils to learn and know. Teachers are having to revisit previous learning. This is slowing down the rate at which pupils are learning new knowledge in a range of subjects.

Children in the early years get off to a good start to their education. The early years curriculum has been constructed well. Adults are skilful at developing children's language skills. There is a focus on developing early reading skills right from the start. Children play with each other kindly and behave well in class.

The teaching of early reading is effective. Leaders ensure that the books children read match the sounds they know. Leaders identify swiftly any pupil who is falling behind. They put support in place so that these children can catch up quickly. Children learn to read as soon as they start school. Pupils enjoy reading. Leaders ensure that all staff follow and teach the school's phonics programme.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They put a range of appropriate support in place to help them in their learning and development. Pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life. Pupils with social or emotional needs are well supported. Pupils talked about 'The Nest'. This is a room they can visit to talk to a trusted adult. Pupils say this helps them to manage their feelings. Leaders ensure that pupils are well cared for. Skilled staff provide the emotional support some pupils need. Vulnerable pupils' needs are well met.

Leaders place a high priority on developing pupils' experiences beyond their learning in the classroom. The school offers a range of before- and after-school clubs and many of the pupils attend. This provides opportunities for pupils to maintain active and healthy lifestyles. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes in their learning. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to be resilient. Leaders want to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. However, a few pupils show disrespect to each other. They occasionally use inappropriate language based on gender or sexuality. Leaders take this very seriously.

Governors have undertaken training and sought external advice of how to fulfil their roles more effectively. They have a range of skills and knowledge which is helping them to hold leaders to account. The multi-academy trust is committed to the school and visits the school regularly to check on the rate of improvement.

Leaders are mindful of staff well-being and workload. However, there have been many staffing changes in a short space of time. Some staff have found this challenging because it has increased their workload. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of communication by leaders. They say they do not always feel listened to. Leaders have prioritised the development of clearer communications. Leaders are united in their determination to address this quickly and effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at this school. Leaders are passionate about supporting vulnerable children and families. Safeguarding processes are robust and enable leaders to identify and help pupils who may be at risk of harm. All staff know pupils well. They know the pupils' vulnerabilities that may be barriers to keeping safe. Leaders ensure that staff know and fully understand the reporting structures in school. All staff have received relevant safeguarding training. Those responsible for governance ensure that school leaders are safer recruitment trained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have sequenced their intent for the curriculum clearly. However, there are variations in the implementation of the curriculum in some subjects and some year groups. There are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. These result from a legacy of poor curriculum planning. Therefore, without overburdening teachers or overloading pupils' memory, leaders should ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between filling the gaps in pupils' knowledge that still exist while introducing new learning. Teachers should use their information about what pupils can do to plan their work so that those pupils who struggle, or who have fallen behind, can catch up quickly.
- The behaviour of some pupils is having a negative impact on their learning and that of their peers. This is because some teachers feel they do not have the support of leaders to implement the new behaviour policy effectively. They need training and support so that they are able to implement the new behaviour policy consistently. Some pupils need to know that disruptive behaviour is not acceptable.
- Some parents and staff raise concerns about the quality of communication provided by senior leaders about the life of the school and how they can support pupils' learning at home. Leaders need to ensure they communicate clearly with, and listen to, parents, carers and staff. This is to ensure there is a cohesive community approach to school improvement.

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	142738
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10200251
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Christopher Donnellan
Executive Headteacher	Kirstie Yuen
Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimary.northants.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's most recent section 48 inspection, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in March 2018. These inspections typically take place once every five years.
- The school is part of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academies Trust (OLICAT).

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the executive headteacher, who is also the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, the executive deputy headteacher, the executive assistant headteacher, curriculum subject leaders and teachers from across all year groups. Inspectors also met with members of the

governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors spoke to representatives from the multi-academy trust.

- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils to talk about their learning across the curriculum.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science, geography and history. They spoke with the leaders of these subjects. Inspectors visited lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work and documentation to understand the quality of education.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records. Inspectors spoke with the designated safeguarding lead. They also spoke to staff, trust members, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered 18 responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as 17 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of them and from the 18 staff who responded to the confidential questionnaire.

Inspection team

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