

Inspection of St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School

329 Lewisham High Street, London SE13 6NX

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They are very proud of the work they do to help the local community, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and leaders have high expectations. Clear routines lead to calm, purposeful behaviour, in and out of class. Staff expect pupils to try their best and to work well together.

Teachers bring subjects to life through a well-planned and interesting curriculum. Pupils feel well supported by their teachers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same ambitious curriculum. Staff support these pupils' learning effectively.

Leaders and governors are driven by the school's values and ethos. They ensure that pupils learn about other cultures and religions. Leaders aim for pupils to be respectful of everyone. Differences are celebrated. Leaders strive to make the school a hub of the local community. Parents and carers feel welcomed and included.

Pupils feel safe at school. They said that bullying does occasionally happen but is rare. If there are issues or disagreements, staff sort these out quickly. Pupils are extremely respectful of their peers and of adults. Pupils spoke with pride about their leadership roles in the school. For example, young leaders and prefects help younger pupils in the playground and around the school.

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

Leaders prioritise reading throughout the school. When children join the early years, they benefit from daily phonics teaching. Staff follow a carefully planned phonics programme and receive training on how to teach the programme effectively. They have regular training updates to maintain their expertise. This includes, for example, making sure that staff know how to help all pupils keep on track with the phonics programme. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they learn in phonics. This ensures that pupils gain the knowledge they need to become fluent readers.

Pupils like to talk about their favourite books and read widely. Leaders have recently extended the range of books on offer for pupils to read. Pupils enjoy reading texts that introduce them to a wide range of cultures, communities and experiences. Pupils of all ages also enjoy listening to their teachers read out loud. Story time is valued by all.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. They have thought carefully about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember. In some subjects, such as art and history, this essential knowledge is taught through different themes. On occasions, teaching in these subjects does not clearly emphasise the essential subject content that leaders expect pupils to know. For example, in art, pupils focus more on exploring the theme being covered, rather than developing their use of different techniques, such as drawing and painting.

Nevertheless, most aspects of the curriculum are planned and taught well. Pupils gain a secure understanding of key knowledge and concepts over time. For example, in mathematics, the curriculum focuses on building up and deepening pupils' grasp of number and place value. This focus begins in the early years. For instance, children learn to recognise and read numbers in different contexts, such as those that they see on clocks. Staff check pupils' understanding regularly. They adjust teaching quickly to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Following pupils' return to school after the national lockdowns, leaders made sure that pupils' understanding of calculation methods remained strong. Pupils apply their understanding well, for example when solving mathematical problems and looking for connections and patterns.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are keen to learn and explore. Throughout the curriculum, staff prioritise children's language and communication skills. This includes providing well-targeted support for children who speak English as an additional language. Staff plan learning so that children have lots to talk about. For example, children eagerly described why they were wrapping different gifts for Father Christmas.

Leaders and staff understand fully the needs of pupils with SEND. They make adaptations to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support. Learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils know the school's routines to promote positive behaviour. Staff use these routines consistently, and pupils enjoy 'going for gold' in lessons.

Leaders provide extensive, high-quality experiences to support pupils' personal development. Staff offer pupils a plentiful range of clubs and trips. A very high proportion of pupils take up these opportunities. Leaders also encourage pupils to understand how they can play a part in helping others, both in and out of school. For example, pupils organise regular charity events. The school's annual harvest collection has been extended to support the community throughout the year.

Leaders find ways to reduce teachers' workload. For example, they have adjusted how teachers assess and mark pupils' work so that teachers find it manageable. Staff feel that leaders consider their well-being and work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand what they need to do to keep pupils safe. They encourage all staff to be vigilant. Leaders act effectively when concerns arise. This includes sharing relevant information appropriately with staff and external professionals.

Leaders make sure that pupils have a range of ways to raise any concerns that they may have. For instance, 'worry boxes', in school and on the website, enable pupils to let staff know if they are feeling anxious or unhappy. Staff act quickly to address any concerns.

Leaders provide staff with regular training on safeguarding to ensure that they understand their responsibilities, including any changes to statutory guidance. All staff are proactive in keeping pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and staff are clear about the essential learning pupils need to know and remember. However, sometimes, in subjects such as art and history, the delivery of the curriculum does not focus sharply on this essential learning. On occasion, pupils are set tasks that do not contribute as effectively to the development of their subject-specific knowledge. Leaders need to provide teachers with clear guidance and training on how to strengthen the delivery of the history and art curriculum.

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	100730
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10199945
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	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Pring
Headteacher	Christine Graham
Website	www.st-marys.lewisham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2017.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.
- There is a part-time Nursery class in the morning and afternoon.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in June 2019.

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 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of staff. Inspectors also met with members of the Diocese of Southwark, the local authority and the governing body.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum for other subjects.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke to a range of staff about their views of behaviour, their workload and well-being. Inspectors also spoke with pupils to consider their views.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and considered the four responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered the responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff about the school's work to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered safeguarding records, documentation and the school's single central record of staff suitability checks.

Inspection team

Adam Vincent, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Fearnley

Ofsted Inspector

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