

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School

Dollis Park, Finchley, London N3 1BT

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 November 2021

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

This school was last inspected 10 years ago years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values are an essential part of school life. Leaders use these values to underpin the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the work they do to support charities and good causes. They also spoke about how they have learned about the importance of treating others with kindness and respect.

Pupils are happy and safe in the school. They listen carefully and are motivated during lessons. Pupils are energetic and play together well at breaktimes. They develop strong working relationships with the adults in school. Pupils know they can speak to a member of staff if they are worried about anything. They trust that adults will keep them safe. If any incidents of bullying occur, leaders deal with them appropriately.

Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are committed to supporting pupils to be successful and they have high expectations for pupils. Leaders regularly check how well pupils are learning. If any pupils fall behind, leaders put support in place to help them catch up. As a result, pupils achieve well.

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

Leaders make sure that the school's curriculum meets the ambition of the national curriculum. Generally, leaders have thought about the most important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Leaders plan the order in which this knowledge should be taught. This careful sequencing starts in the early years. For example, in mathematics, curriculum plans in the early years include the introduction of words such as 'shorter' and 'longer'. This vocabulary prepares children for learning about number and geometry later, higher up the school. However, in some subjects, leaders have not thought as carefully about the important knowledge that pupils need to know. In these subjects, they have not made such careful links with the learning in the early years. Leaders work with teachers and check how subject plans are implemented. Leaders know which subject planning is particularly well thought out and have plans to improve others.

Leaders make sure that pupils routinely recap and revisit key knowledge in lessons. Leaders and teachers check how well pupils learn this knowledge. If pupils fall behind, leaders put timely support in place to help them catch up.

Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included and access the full curriculum. Leaders check that plans are appropriate. Leaders provide effective training for teachers and teaching assistants. This helps them spot pupils who may need extra help. Leaders work with staff to check that pupils with SEND receive the right support. Leaders also work with external therapists and experts to provide specialised support for pupils who need it.

Leaders prioritise reading. They create various opportunities for pupils to read throughout the day. Pupils enjoy reading and visiting the school library. Phonics lessons happen daily in the early years and across Years 1 to 2. Teachers and teaching assistants receive helpful training to teach phonics. Leaders use a combination of resources to teach phonics, and make sure pupils read books matched to the sounds they are learning. As a result, pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Leaders' focus on praise and rewards for positive behaviour motivates all pupils to behave well. As a result, lessons are calm and orderly. Children quickly learn to behave well as soon as they enter the school in the Nursery. This is because staff give children supportive, positive reminders. Any low-level disruption does not impact learning.

Educational visits and wider opportunities support pupils' wider development. Pupils are enthusiastic about the extra-curricular clubs on offer before and after school. These include chess, choir and cake decorating. Pupils have opportunities to become school council representatives. They speak confidently about the responsibilities this role provides. Pupils enjoyed wearing odd socks to school to celebrate people's differences. Leaders in assemblies and visiting speakers promote pupils' understanding of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, including online. The structured approach to personal, social and health education (PSHE) includes teaching about healthy relationships. Pupils are taught about children's rights.

Governors receive regular training to help them carry out their roles. They support leaders and hold them to account for their decisions. Governors and leaders work together and support staff to manage their workload and well-being. Staff value the support they receive from leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive effective training to help them keep pupils safe. Staff use the school's systems well to report any concerns to leaders. Leaders take appropriate action, including seeking professional advice if necessary. Leaders create a culture where pupils feel able to speak to an adult if they are worried or need help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified or sequenced the most important knowledge pupils need to know and remember from the early years to Year 6. As a result, sometimes pupils do not know how this new knowledge links and builds on from what was learned previously. Leaders need to make this explicit to teachers so that pupils have opportunities to recap and embed key knowledge.

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	101323
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10203314
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	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Turner
Headteacher	Stefan Roos
Website	www.stmarysfinchley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2011

Information about this school

- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2015.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in March 2017.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, computing, geography, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met 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 looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority, and spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors looked at safeguarding records, including records of pre-employment checks completed. Inspectors also spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about systems for reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their views of behaviour, their workload and their well-being. Inspectors also spoke with pupils to consider their views.

Inspection team

Andrea Bedeau, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Jaeggi	Ofsted Inspector
Rekha Bhakoo	Ofsted Inspector
David Boyle	Ofsted Inspector

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