

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School Stockport

Roman Road, Heaton Norris, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 1RF

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not achieve well in this school. They do not learn as well as they should in many subjects. They are not prepared for the next stage of their education. This is because leaders have not thought carefully enough about the curriculum. Pupils do not learn the rich subject content that they need to know and remember.

Leaders and teachers lack the educational knowledge and expertise that they need to improve pupils' experiences of the school. Their expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour are not high enough. Governors have not asked the right questions of leaders to find out about the quality of education that pupils are receiving.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), lack enthusiasm for learning. They find learning uninteresting. This is because pupils are not inspired by the curriculum. Staff do not make sure that the curriculum matches pupils' needs or interests. In addition, many pupils learn in an environment that is tired, cluttered and scruffy. Leaders and governors have not used resources well enough to create an environment that supports learning.

Many pupils have poor attendance. Other pupils are late for school. This is because leaders have not established clear expectations for the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Pupils feel safe at school and can speak with staff about any worries that they may have. They said that leaders take bullying seriously and resolve any issues quickly. Many pupils behave sensibly around the school. However, some pupils are unhappy about the unhelpful behaviour of others. This means that some pupils do not learn and play in harmony.

Pupils appreciate the wider experiences that staff provide for them, for instance learning outdoors in a woodland area. They enjoy activities at the after-school club.

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

Governors and leaders have let down the pupils at St Mary's. Pupils do not achieve well across a range of subjects. Leaders' actions to improve the school and ensure pupils benefit from a good quality of education have been too slow or ineffective. Leaders, including subject leaders, have given insufficient thought to what they want pupils to learn. This has led to curriculums which do not include the content necessary for pupils to build their knowledge and be ready for the next stage in their education.

Some staff have weak subject knowledge. They do not fully understand what to teach pupils in each subject. They are not able to use effective assessment strategies to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. They do not build on the stronger start that children make in the early years.

Leaders have not provided enough training to ensure that staff know how pupils will learn and remember subject content. This means that pupils do not have a curriculum which helps them to know more and remember more. For example, pupils in Year 6 have weak speaking and listening skills and a poor grasp of mathematics that are not solely the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to huge gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills, Year 6 pupils are not ready for secondary school.

In some areas of learning in the early years, staff have thought carefully about the knowledge that they teach children. This helps children to settle well at school, cooperate with others and be ready for some of their learning in Year 1. For example, staff ensure that children develop the knowledge and skills in communication and language that they need to speak confidently and listen attentively. Leaders have also made reading an important focus of the curriculum in the early years. However, in some other areas of learning, staff have not developed the curriculum as successfully. This means that children are not developing all of the knowledge that they need.

In some classes, some pupils quickly lose interest in their work. This is because of the weaknesses in the curriculum. This low-level disruption sometimes causes other pupils to lose concentration so that they are unable to learn new knowledge.

Leaders follow up pupils' absences with parents and carers. However, pupils' attendance is consistently low and shows little sign of sustained improvement. Too many pupils arrive late at school. Over recent years, many pupils have missed considerable amounts of their education. They have significant gaps in their knowledge.

Governance is weak. Governors are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. They do not challenge leaders effectively about the quality of education in the school. Governors have not found out why pupils' achievement has remained poor or why pupils' attendance is low.

Since the previous inspection, the local authority provided support to aid improvement. However, this did not have sufficient impact. More recently, the local authority and the diocese have organised additional support from experts outside of the school to offer support and challenge to leaders. Consequently, some leaders' curriculum thinking has started to improve. However, this intensive, extra support has only been in place for one term. It is only just starting to uncover the scope of the school's failings. There is little evidence that the shortcomings at the school will be overcome without sustained and intensive help.

Pupils with SEND experience a poor-quality education. Leaders' and staff's expectations of pupils with SEND are low and pupils' needs are not accurately identified, assessed or met. Teachers do not make sure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum without considerable support. Teachers rely too much on teaching assistants to work with pupils with SEND.

Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Children's and pupils' learning of phonics is starting to improve. That said, some staff incorrectly say letter sounds. Other staff do not match phonics teaching to pupils' phonic knowledge. Leaders act too slowly when they spot weaknesses in the teaching of phonics. Leaders make sure that pupils have access to a worthwhile range of fiction and non-fiction books in the school's library collections. In the early years, staff thoughtfully set out and use books carefully with children throughout the classroom. However, older pupils told inspectors that teachers do little to celebrate and promote their love of reading.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different families, about the importance of mental health and about how to keep themselves safe online. However, the curriculum has limited opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural knowledge or to learn about fundamental British values. Staff do not teach pupils the skills that they need as citizens to be able to debate important topics.

Leaders have taken some action to improve staff's workload and their work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff understand the possible safeguarding risks to pupils. Leaders and staff are vigilant for any signs that pupils may need support and protection from harm. They teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including learning about the risks of using social media and online games. Leaders keep safeguarding records carefully and link with other professionals to offer support to families. Governors keep a regular check on the safeguarding work of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The current curriculum in key stages 1 and 2 is ineffective. Staff have a limited understanding of how to design and then teach a high-quality curriculum. This results in low expectations, ineffective assessment strategies and weak learning for pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders should ensure that they develop an ambitious curriculum that enables pupils to gain a rich body of knowledge so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They should also make sure that staff are well equipped to deliver and assess the curriculum, so that all pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.
- In the early years, the curriculum in some areas of learning is underdeveloped. This means that children do not develop all the essential knowledge that they need as a foundation for their later learning. Leaders should ensure that all of the curriculum in early years is equally well considered.

- Some staff make mistakes when modelling to pupils the sounds that letters make. Some staff fail to adapt the phonics curriculum to the needs of different pupils, including those with SEND. These weaknesses hold pupils back from learning to read fluently. Leaders should ensure that staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach phonics effectively so that pupils become confident and accurate readers.
- Some pupils become distracted in classrooms. This low-level disruption affects other pupils' concentration and learning. This happens because the curriculum fails to meet their needs or interests. Valuable learning time is wasted and gaps in some pupils' knowledge widen. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum engages pupils so that no learning time is lost.
- Too many pupils have poor attendance and punctuality. This means that they miss essential learning time and develop large gaps in their curriculum knowledge. Leaders should identify more effective ways to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and on time. This is so that pupils can gain the most from their schooling.
- Leaders' curriculum for supporting pupils' personal development is limited. This means that pupils are not as well prepared as they could be to live in modern Britain. Leaders should review the provision for pupils' personal development to make sure that it fully enables pupils to become aware of British values and Britain's cultural heritage and be able to debate important topics with others.
- Leaders' actions to improve the school are not bearing fruit. Leaders are not taking effective action to stem the decline in pupils' achievement. They have been too slow to design and implement an effective curriculum. They have not tackled all the weaknesses in the teaching of phonics and reading. Leaders are overly dependent on outside support to help them to improve the school. Leaders should take swift action to improve the curriculum and the quality of subject leadership so that they can secure sustainable improvement and resolve issues promptly in the quality of pupils' education.
- Governance is ineffective. The governing body gives little challenge to leaders. Governors misunderstand the gravity of the weaknesses in the school. This means the challenge and support that they offer school leaders is misplaced or ineffectual. Governors should develop a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They must develop their skills and expertise in order to gain a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities in ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, receive a good education.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	106124
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10200807
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	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mike Boswell
Headteacher	Mary Bowden
Website	www.st-marysrc.stockport.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In June 2021, the Diocese of Salford completed a review of the quality of education at the school. As a result, the diocese and Stockport local authority formed a joint executive board of education experts to support and challenge the school. The board began work in September 2021. This is a long-term arrangement. Alongside the board, experts from other schools are supporting the work of leaders and staff at St Mary's.
- The headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term 2021 and an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- The chair of governors and some other members of the governing body are new to their roles.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, several staff, two officers of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Salford.
- Inspectors considered information from a diocesan review of the school completed in June 2021 and minutes of meetings of the joint executive board. Inspectors also considered a recent letter from Stockport local authority sent to senior leaders at the school.
- Inspectors considered leaders' plans for improving the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and six other governors.
- The lead inspector spoke with some parents as they came to collect their children from school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, about their experiences of the school.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and music. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading to staff.
- Inspectors also considered information about the school's curriculum in art and design and geography.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including leaders' records of checks of staff's suitability to work with pupils. They spoke with pupils about safeguarding. They also reviewed some of the leaders' safeguarding records. They met with the leaders for safeguarding to discuss how they and the staff work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors considered responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Woodhouse

Ofsted Inspector

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