

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Banbury

St Mary's C of E Primary School, Southam Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX16 2EG

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2022

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at this welcoming school. They believe it to be a compassionate place in which to learn, grow and make friends. Pupils also enjoy learning new things. They especially like mathematics, but many pupils would like the work to be even more challenging.

Pupils behave well around the school. Staff have high expectations and model everything they expect. Playtimes are social occasions for everyone. Children from very different backgrounds delight in each other's company and friendship. Pupils confirm bullying is very rare. Any worries are dealt with effectively by staff.

Leaders are wisely aware of the challenges and changing school population. Therefore, the school prioritises building relationships and understanding everyone's needs. The inclusive culture is clear and consistent with the prominent school values. As a result, pupils get the start they need and feel that they belong.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this school, its staff and its principled approach. One parent said, 'The school has created a strong culture that celebrates diversity and empowers children to learn.'

Leaders make sure pupils experience a broad range of subjects. They also provide a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. Pupils have recently begun to take part in forest school, which they love.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum to meet the varied needs of learners. Staff identify the support for those who speak English as an additional language or who may have never attended school before. These pupils learn alongside their classmates with suitable adaptations and encouragement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. This is because leaders identify individual needs quickly and respond skilfully in a holistic way. If pupils need more intensive help, they receive extra support through inclusive teaching in the 'Nurture Nest'. Pupils acquire skills there to help them learn the curriculum even better when back in the classroom.

Teachers' subject knowledge is too variable. Many teachers show real expertise in how they help pupils to learn, for example in phonics. Yet, some teachers do not know or watch carefully enough to see what progress pupils make. This is because the essential knowledge to learn is not clear enough. Curriculum thinking, for example in personal, social and health education (PSHE), does not consistently identify what pupils need to remember long term. This limits how pupils can begin to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. In physical education (PE), pupils learn how to perform safe and intelligent movements in dance. They also enjoy developing their basic skills and refining techniques ready for new learning.

The teaching of reading is prioritised and begins immediately when children join the school. Regular training and support ensure that staff develop expertise when teaching phonics. Books closely match the sounds pupils are learning in lessons. This helps them reinforce their emerging phonics knowledge and develop fluency. Tailored support and flexible staffing help pupils make rapid progress. Pupils grow into more confident readers, discovering genuine pleasure from reading books.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start by settling quickly into clear routines. Children learn to play cooperatively and take advantage of exciting learning opportunities, for example in construction or in developing their own core strength. Pupils want to behave, try hard to do the right thing and respond well to praise. However, occasionally, poor behaviour sometimes slows teaching unnecessarily. Leaders are aware and have plans to address this. Older pupils are proud to show younger pupils how to behave successfully and be kind.

Leaders prioritise personal development. Character growth, as well as learning a range of strategies to use in everyday life, are well planned. Although in the early stages, pupils are gaining more resilience and independence. The PSHE programme helps pupils understand how to look after their bodies and minds. It also helps pupils consider when to look after others, why it is important to show respect and how to be a true friend. Pupils are tolerant and celebrate diversity, rather than focus on difference. This helps them to be prepared for life in modern Britain. Thoughtful trips, special events and opportunities for all raise pupils' aspirations. As a result, pupils make stronger connections in learning and broaden their cultural experiences.

The trust and local governors have accurate views of the schools' strengths and priorities. Both groups are working more effectively to challenge and support the school. However, there is more to be done. For example, by reviewing systems and practices, oversight can be more consistent and rigorous. Staff are unanimously proud to be part of the team and enjoy working at this school. Staff value that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know the school's community very well. This means they are alert to any concerns around pupils' safety and well-being. Staff understand their responsibilities because of effective training. Staff report concerns quickly so that leaders can follow up with prompt action. Leaders also work well with external agencies to support families. Pupils receive appropriate advice about keeping themselves safe. Indeed, pupils confirm they feel safe and well cared for by committed staff. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children. Parents receive important safeguarding advice through the website and in discussions with staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The work pupils are given in mathematics is not consistently demanding. It does not match the aims of the curriculum and is not coherently well planned. As a result, pupils are not effectively building their knowledge and skills cumulatively to be better prepared for the next stage of learning. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are explicitly clear about what pupils need to know and the best order to learn it.
- Teachers' expert subject knowledge is sometimes too variable, for example in PSHE. Therefore, teaching does not consistently help pupils remember long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. Leaders should equip teachers with the skills to check that all pupils have learned the essential knowledge securely.

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	144872
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10211281
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	215
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Winrow
Headteacher	Victoria Woods
Website	www.banburystmarysschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school's population has grown significantly in recent years. It has increased to reflect local contextual changes. This includes families arriving from other countries for work, as well as refugees.
- St Mary's Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy in November 2017. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This school is a Church of England school and received its last section 48 inspection in July 2016. The school's next inspection is due but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There is an after-school and breakfast club run on site and managed by the school.
- There is a nursery provision at the school which has children aged three and four years.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector held a separate meeting with a representative from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, PSHE and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments. An inspector also talked with parents on the afternoon of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits, as well as at playtimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lorraine Greco

Ofsted Inspector

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