

Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Kirkley Cliff Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0DG

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and well cared for at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School.

Pupils say that bullying is rare, and that if it happens, it is quickly sorted out. Pupils say that adults help them if they have a worry or concern. Pupils are considerate and friendly, and respectful of each other.

Pupils have lots of opportunity to take on different responsibilities. For example, the house captains enjoy and take great pride in collecting merit points, as well as planning and running sports day. The eco council is passionate about how it can improve the environment.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils listen carefully to adults when they need help to improve their behaviour choices.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and reading, and they like to see, 'where a book can take you'. However, teachers do not always know exactly what pupils already know and can do. Therefore, some pupils struggle to access work that is too hard for them and do not get the right help quickly enough. This means that some pupils have gaps in their learning and are not as ready for the next stage in their education as they should be.

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum. This is recent work. Currently, there is not enough guidance for teachers to know what content should be taught in some curriculum areas. As a result, what pupils learn year on year varies in some aspects of the curriculum and does not always build on pupils' prior learning.

Many subject leaders are new in role and have not had the training to ensure that they are fully effective in their leadership roles. Leaders' checking has not resulted in precise enough actions to make the necessary improvements, for example, in specific curriculum content being considered so that teachers are both confident in their delivery of the curriculum and know what they need to teach to ensure that there are no gaps in pupils' learning.

Reading is prioritised by leaders and is coherently planned across the school. This starts well in early years. Gaps in knowledge are accurately identified and addressed. This ensures that increasing numbers of pupils are developing the essential reading skills they need to access the curriculum and become fluent readers.

In early years, the knowledge and skills that the children need to develop are embedded into a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum. New topics are often introduced with an exciting starter activity, such as making potions in science week.

This captures the children's imagination and contributes towards them being enthusiastic learners. In addition, the effective teaching of phonics builds secure foundations for developing fluency as they move through the school. Children in early years are well prepared for Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not achieving as well as they should. This is because their specific needs are not always accurately identified. As a result, the support put in place does not meet pupils' specific needs, which results in pupils not always being able to access the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to rectify it.

Behaviour across the school is good as a result of actions taken by leaders. The new behaviour system helps to maintain a calm learning environment. Support is in place for pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour and emotions. This helps the pupils to settle and access their learning more effectively.

Leaders plan and promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn how to be resilient, responsible, active citizens. Pupils can talk about ways in which we are different and how important it is to show tolerance and respect. Visitors from different countries have contributed towards developing pupils' understanding of language and culture. Pupils support a range of charities, both local and beyond, and have contributed to improving their local environment with a beach clean and by putting up bird boxes in their locality.

Staff are positive about the improvements in the school. They feel supported and their well-being is considered.

The new leadership team is working with governors and the trust to develop subject leadership and the curriculum at the school. While governors receive an increasingly wide range of information from leaders, they do not check precisely what difference leaders' actions are making to the quality of education pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a secure knowledge, through regular and effective training, of safeguarding issues. They are able to use this information to be vigilant and know when and how to take action to keep children safe. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that pupils get the right support.

The curriculum helps pupils to know how to stay safe online and in the wider world. Pupils say that they feel safe. Most parents and carers agree.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the precise content that needs to be taught in some aspects of the curriculum. This means that what pupils learn does not always build in sequential steps. As a result, pupils do not grow their knowledge well over time. Leaders need to implement plans that are clearer for teachers to follow so that what pupils learn builds in sensible steps and helps them to be better prepared for new learning.
- Leaders and governors do not have an accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development throughout the curriculum. The impact of leaders' and governors' checking is not facilitating curriculum improvements quickly enough. New leaders need further training to enable them to carry out their role more effectively and to bring about more timely improvements to the quality of education.
- Leaders recognise that provision for pupils with SEND has not been rigorous when identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive the training they need to be able to accurately identify pupils' needs. Leaders then need to make sure that staff use this information to plan for support that will help pupils with SEND to be better prepared for each step of their education.

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	142806
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10210941
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	188
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Matthew Huke Jenner
Headteacher	Ewa Parker
Website	www.stmarysrcps.com
Date of previous inspection	5 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a one-form-entry primary school.
- The school converted to academy status in 2016. Previously, the school was also called St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School.
- The school is part of St John the Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust.
- This school does not make use of 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 had 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.

- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with leaders. This included the head of school, the executive headteacher, the senior leader and the special

educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with members of the trust, including the trust's chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO.

- Inspectors also met with members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. Inspectors looked at trust and governor monitoring paperwork, including minutes of local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. They met with curriculum leaders and visited lessons. They reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, as well as speaking with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading to a familiar adult, visited the playground, observed lunchtime, and spoke with two different pupil groups to learn about pupils' behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors looked at the arrangements for safeguarding. This included meeting with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy DSL and scrutinising the single central record and other safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 21 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey, and 65 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sharon Waldron, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Pigram

Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022