

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Wharf Lane, Brewood, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 9BG

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a caring school. Pupils abide by the school motto of 'Following Mary in Faith'. Leaders are ambitious for pupils and want the best for every child. Pupils are happy and feel safe. They are proud of their school and enjoy attending.

Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that staff will act swiftly to resolve any issues or concerns they have. Parents are positive about the quality of education their children receive.

Pupils achieve well academically and personally. Leaders ensure that reading is well taught. Pupils gain wider experiences and develop their talents through a range of enrichment activities such as after-school clubs, visitors to school, trips and residential. Pupils recently enjoyed a dinosaur workshop. They learned new skills from a visiting artist and sculptor. Year 6 pupils further developed their knowledge about the Second World War during a trip to Cannock Chase Museum.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite and courteous. They listen attentively and are fully engaged in their learning during lessons. At social times, pupils play well together. Older pupils support younger pupils outside so that they are happy and have friends to play with.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum for pupils. The curriculum is taught in a way that helps all pupils to read well and to know and remember more over time in most subjects. The Painsley Multi Academy Company (MAC) provides good support for subject leaders. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They recap prior learning to help pupils remember things they have learned before. However, in the early years, opportunities to practise and consolidate learning are not always clear enough. At times, children do not know what is expected of them when working independently.

In the main, teachers plan learning based on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils develop a love of mathematics. This is because mathematics is taught well and activities allow pupils to problem-solve and reason well. However, some teachers do not check pupils' learning effectively during lessons and over time. Not all staff use the school's assessment systems consistently or provide opportunities for pupils to check each other's work as they do in other classes. Some staff do not use all the information about pupils' learning to ensure that they build on what they know and can do.

The youngest children are happy and settle well into school life. Routines are well established. Leaders prioritise reading and staff have high expectations. Staff

interact well with children. This helps children to know more words and use them in their daily conversations.

Staff are highly skilled and receive regular training in phonics. Reading books closely match the letter sounds pupils learn. The reading curriculum is planned carefully and pupils are taught to read well. Younger pupils learn to read and write words and simple sentences accurately. Older pupils explore a range of books by different authors. They develop an in-depth understanding of how authors write and use these techniques in their own writing.

The curriculum helps pupils develop their personal character. Pupils want to achieve their personal best. They learn about the potential of human achievement through the work of famous artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who are disadvantaged are effectively supported to access the same curriculum as other pupils. Staff provide timely help and support to pupils who need it. This enables pupils to focus on their learning and achieve well.

The school provides a range of enrichment opportunities as part of the curriculum. These experiences help pupils’ personal, social and spiritual development. For example, pupils enjoy fundraising for chosen charities. They empathise with world affairs such as the current situation in Ukraine. Pupils enjoy competing in sports activities. Music meditation and mindfulness help pupils to reflect.

Pupils develop confidence and communication skills by taking on additional responsibilities such as those of play leaders and librarians. The school rules help pupils to understand right and wrong and how to keep themselves and others safe. Opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions help pupils to recognise and respect others’ differences. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and priorities for improvement. Staff say that leaders help them to manage their workload effectively.

Parents express concern about headteacher turnover. MAC leaders have provided interim executive headteacher arrangements to aid school stability. They have recently appointed a full-time principal to help alleviate parental concerns.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff understand their role in keeping children safe. Staff record and report any concerns swiftly to safeguarding leaders. This includes sexual harassment, child criminal exploitation and domestic abuse. Leaders seek the right support for vulnerable pupils. This includes support from external agencies. Pupils learn about how to maintain healthy relationships and keep safe when online.

Leaders ensure the appropriate checks on staff are undertaken before they are appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Expectations of continuous provision in the early years are not clear enough. Sometimes, children lack direction and are unclear of what is expected of them. Leaders should support staff to ensure that children practise and consolidate learning effectively when working independently.
- Sometimes, teachers do not check pupils' learning as they should. They do not consistently follow the school's approach to assessment. Consequently, some teachers do not have a detailed understanding of what pupils have learned and remembered. Leaders should ensure that staff consistently follow the school's approach to assessment so that they use all of the information available to them to establish what pupils know, understand and can do.
- Parents express concern about recent headteacher turnover. They feel this has caused instability and confusion in communication and engagement with the school community. Leaders should engage effectively with parents to foster positive relationships between school and the local community.

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	142214
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10211992
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kenneth Wilson
Headteacher	Dianne Stokes (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimarybrewood.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use 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 carried out deep dives in art, reading, mathematics and music. This included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, examining curriculum documents and talking with pupils and staff. They also looked at work from a sample of other subjects.
- The lead inspector looked at a range of documentation on the school's website as part of the preparatory work.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. This included examining the record of employment checks on school staff.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, inspectors had formal meetings with the executive headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the early years leader, governors, the chief executive of the trust and the chair of the trust.
- The inspectors took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lorraine Lord, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Potter	Ofsted Inspector

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