

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 4BB

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

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| 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 at St Mary's Catholic Primary School are benefiting from changes that leaders and staff have enacted over recent years. The curriculum on offer helps many to achieve well. Pupils are keen readers. They are confident when tested on knowledge they have learned because staff teach words and ideas clearly. Pupils say that it 'sticks in their head'.

Pupils are wonderfully charming. It does not take long to witness pupils' manners and good humour, be it through opening a door for someone, taking turns giving ideas in lessons, or sharing a joke together at lunchtime. They learn these behaviours through the considered half-termly focus on the school values.

Recently, school trips have resumed. Pupils were grateful to the parent teacher association for arranging a visit to the theatre to watch a pantomime. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 speak enthusiastically about their residential trips. They like how they learn teamwork skills, taking part in activities they would not ordinarily do. Pupils who attend the dance and football clubs speak positively about them. Still, pupils need staff to broaden the extra-curricular offering so that more of them may practise or realise their interests and talents.

Pupils know that staff are kind, supportive individuals. When asked, they quickly list their trusted adults in the school, before ending with, 'You can speak to any adult about a problem and they will help.' Pupils feel happy and safe in their school.

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

Leaders work collaboratively to complete ongoing improvements in the school. They rightly feel proud of what they have achieved, particularly in their curriculum development. When leaders make changes to the curriculum, they provide training to staff. This may include in-person meetings, visits to other schools to observe good practice, or online support, such as 'how to' videos that strengthen staff's skills. Staff report very positively on the support they receive from leaders. It ensures that they feel proud to work at St Mary's Catholic Primary School.

In all subjects, curriculum plans set out learning from Year 1 to Year 6. There are appropriate lesson sequences. For example, in physical education, Year 4 pupils practise throwing, catching and striking with a bat, before showcasing their ability in a game of cricket. This ensures that pupils know what to do and how to do it well.

However, for a few areas of learning in the early years, content in curriculum plans is not broken down into what children learn in the pre-school, Nursery Year and Reception Year. This can mean that all children complete the same activity, where staff are unsure of a clear progression of knowledge and skills. Leaders' work to address this is incomplete.

Reading starts with a successful approach to the teaching of phonics. Leaders provide coaching and training so staff know how to teach phonics well. Lessons are clearly structured. The shared approaches mean that pupils learn useful strategies that help them recognise and read sounds in words. All pupils receive a book well matched to their ability. This, along with the storybooks teachers read aloud to pupils, promotes a love of reading. Still, a small number of pupils in key stage 2 do not read unfamiliar words with confidence.

Assessment practices are well thought out. The 'live marking' approach allows teachers to address pupils' mistakes promptly. Some subjects include intuitive tests. These help teachers determine a pupil's progress, as well as benchmark the pupil against others nationally. Staff share these assessments with parents and carers, who like the clarity in the information they receive.

Leaders' rigorous systems ensure that provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength in the school. Support plans contain clear, measurable targets. Teachers evaluate these regularly. This helps ensure that suitable support is always in place for the pupils to thrive.

Pupils across the school behave in a kindly manner. Children in the early years are confident. Staff form warm, supportive relationships with them. How staff engage with children helps develop children's communication and understanding of their and others' feelings. Pupils know the systems for rewards and sanctions. They like the weekly celebration assembly. Pupils achieve certificates for demonstrating school values or for successes in reading.

Other than there being a need to broaden the extra-curricular offering so that pupils may develop their creativity and sporting prowess, staff attend to pupils' personal development well. Pupils are unfazed when asked about differences among people. Staff teach them well about the ways people are the same and how to respect the ways people differ. Pupils seek out ways to be helpful around school. For example, the faith ambassadors like overseeing the weekly prayer club for their peers.

Governance is working well. Directors and local academy committee members provide suitable challenge and support to school leaders. They visit school often to check on systems and improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Knowledgeable staff ensure that the necessary safeguarding checks are completed for those adults in school.

Leaders, including governors, complete regular training to keep their knowledge current and accurate. Staff receive regular training too. This helps them speak confidently about how they identify and report their concerns about pupils at risk of

harm. Leaders' comprehensive records provide helpful detail for external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the support they need.

The curriculum, including the programme of assemblies, means that pupils confidently state ways they keep themselves safe on- and offline. They know to use the 'worry box' or to call upon a trusted adult to share a concern.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A very small proportion of pupils do not learn to read fluently by the end of key stage 1. Some of these pupils were not at the school in key stage 1, so have not benefited from a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Leaders must train teachers to ensure that these pupils quickly learn to read the more challenging texts in key stage 2.
- In the early years, not all areas of learning have curriculums that set out what knowledge children learn in the pre-school, Nursery Year and Reception Year. This hinders staff in arranging ambitious activities for children across the three years. Also, pupils in key stage 1 struggle to recall learning in some subjects where teachers cannot identify what pupils learned before in all areas of learning. Leaders must amend their early years curriculum to include a clear progression of knowledge and skills across the early years.
- Currently, the extra-curricular offering is somewhat limited. Pupils may not be realising and developing their talents and interests. Staff must organise a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils across the school.

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

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| Unique reference number | 145324 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10227566 |
| 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 | 221 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Elizabeth Duffy |
| Headteacher | Steve Chiswell |
| Website | www.stmarysprimary.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust.
- The school is federated with St Vincent's Catholic Primary School. The headteacher of St Mary's Catholic Primary School is the headteacher of both schools.
- The school is part of the diocese of Northampton.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act (2005) in March 2018 and was judged to be good.
- 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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the chief executive officer of the trust, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early careers teacher induction coordinator, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and key stage 2 lead. The lead inspector also met with a trust director, four local academy committee members, a school improvement adviser contracted by the trust, and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and physical education.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leads, looked at curriculum plans, 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 listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- An inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including records of meetings.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and a deputy designated safeguarding lead. The lead inspector viewed records relating to safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke with teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. Inspectors also considered the 97 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the 19 responses and 10 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. Inspectors also took account of the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ania Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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