

# Inspection of a good school: St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School, Swanley

Sycamore Drive, Swanley, Kent BR8 7AY

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

## **Outcome**

St Bartholomew's Catholic Primary School, Swanley continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St Bartholomew's is a welcoming school where everyone cares about each other. The school's motto of 'Serve the Lord with Joy' is modelled by leaders and staff.

Leaders are determined that pupils should receive an excellent education and that pupils are kept safe. There are high levels of trust between staff and pupils. Pupils have strong and respectful friendships and say they look after each other 'when times are difficult'.

There have been many recent improvements to the school, such as an outside gym, a pirate ship and table tennis tables for pupils to play on. Leaders offer a broad range of extra-curricular activities, such as Irish dancing or coding club, as well as interesting excursions.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Unkindness or bullying are rare. Pupils show a deep understanding of the school's rules: 'We care for each other. We forgive each other. We respect everyone. We aim high. We work hard.' Pupils follow these rules because they have been agreed with everyone.

Staff have high expectations for what pupils can do and achieve. Parents overwhelmingly agree, saying that 'children thrive at this school not only on an academic level but also on a personal and spiritual level too'.

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

Despite the difficulties of COVID-19, new leadership has brought about many positive changes. Parents, pupils and staff acknowledge the 'seismic' difference these have made. Staff increasingly understand their role in ensuring the headteacher's vision is executed successfully.

Pupils, including children in early years, study a broad range of subjects. There has been much work done to develop and embed a well-considered curriculum. There remains further work to ensure that leaders know the end points they want pupils to achieve, particularly in subjects such as history. In some subjects, the precise knowledge that leaders intend for pupils to learn has not been agreed by staff or set out in plans. This means that teachers cannot accurately check how well pupils are learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff identify pupils and provide them with appropriate care and help for their individual needs. Recent staff appointments have increased capacity in this aspect of leaders' work. Nonetheless, leaders still need to adapt the curriculum in some subjects to make sure that it is well organised and benefits this group of pupils.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn to read as soon as they start in Reception. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, and appropriate support is put in place for those who need to catch up. Leaders are in the process of making sensible changes to ensure that there is a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Staff are being trained so that they can better support all pupils to get off to the best possible start when learning to read. Pupils regularly visit the school's newly refurbished and well-stocked library. They are given many opportunities to read at school, listen to interesting stories and learn about different authors.

Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and achieve well in this subject. This is because teachers build pupils' mathematical knowledge carefully. Should misconceptions occur teachers are quick to pick these up through the school's 'rapid interventions' programme so that pupils do not fall behind. During the inspection, children in Reception were observed learning to count to 10 by getting on and off a 'bus', counting tickets and counting empty seats. In key stage 2, pupils used protractors to read and calculate angles accurately.

Leaders make sure that each pupil is afforded 'their individual dignity'. Pupils understand and celebrate differences and each other's uniqueness. Older pupils are excited by the many leadership responsibilities they are offered, such as being a head boy or girl, a prefect, a greeter at the school gate, a mental health ambassador or a pupil chaplain. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Staff morale is high. There is a strong sense of purpose and camaraderie. Staff, many of whom have been at the school for a long time, feel valued by leaders, as well as those who are newer to their roles. They appreciate leaders' careful attention to their workload and support with their professional development. There have been much-needed and important changes to governance. The governing body, led by the newly appointed and experienced chair of governors, is being restructured. Governors have identified the need for further training to strengthen their knowledge so they can have greater impact in challenging leaders to improve the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of care and vigilance at the school. Effective communication means that staff know pupils and their families well. Leaders are knowledgeable about safeguarding matters and ensure that staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Staff are well trained and know how to report and manage any concerns they may have. Leaders act swiftly on any referrals they receive.

Leaders diligently undertake the statutory checks required on all adults who work at or who visit the school. These records are meticulously maintained.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders are bringing about significant changes and improvements to the curriculum in some subjects. They should ensure these subjects are well sequenced and the knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to learn is identified from Reception to Year 6. This will ensure that all pupils, including pupils with SEND, learn well. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- There are some inconsistencies in how pupils are taught to read. Leaders are in the process of putting in place a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. They should train all staff so they can support all pupils to get off to the best possible start with their reading.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2013.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118860
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10207098
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	332
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Pat Barber
<b>Headteacher</b>	Giovanna Finaldi
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-bartholomewsrc-pri.kent.sch.uk/">www.st-bartholomewsrc-pri.kent.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a Roman Catholic voluntary-aided school. The last statutory inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in May 2018.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The chair of governors took up the role in September 2021. A new clerk to the governors started in January 2021. Three governors have joined the governing body in the last year. The structure of governance is being reviewed. A new school business manager joined the school in May 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and members of the leadership team.

- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors.
- A telephone conversation was held between the inspector and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to some pupils read.
- As part of the inspection of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. The inspector looked at relevant documents, including the school's single central record and staff recruitment checks.
- In order to gather the views of parents, the inspector considered 37 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and 35 free-text comments. The inspector also considered 35 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey and considered staff's views during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to pupils during the inspection and took into account 81 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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