

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Swanage

Northbrook Road, Swanage, Dorset BH19 1QE

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming and inclusive school. The school's motto of 'Be Loving and Truthful' is an integral part of school life. The whole school community has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff put in place strong pastoral support. Most parents are appreciative of the school's caring ethos.

Pupils like coming to school. They appreciate the range of opportunities the school provides beyond the classroom, including music, sport, residential trips and visits. Pupils learn to be considerate members of the community through activities such as fundraising.

Pupils are polite and courteous to each other. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that behaviour is good most of the time. When any disruption to learning occurs, adults sort it out quickly. Pupils say bullying is rare. They say that if it were to happen, adults would deal with it sensitively.

Pupils understand the importance of being respectful and tolerant. They know what it means to be a friend. Pupils have a good understanding of difference and that all people should be treated equally. Pupils talk about the importance of 'having a voice' and know their opinions are respected.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. This ambition is shared across the whole school community. Staff value the teamwork ethos and how leaders support their well-being. They are proud to work at the school.

Leaders ensure there is a sharp focus on reading. As soon as children start in Reception, they develop a love of reading. Children experience a range of songs, stories and rhymes to develop their communication skills. Books are matched to the letters and sounds pupils are learning. Regular assessment means that staff are clear when some pupils struggle. If pupils fall behind, staff ensure support is put in place quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Staff adapt learning appropriately to support their reading development.

Older pupils enjoy reading. One pupil described reading as taking them 'to magical places to use their imagination'. Leaders have thought carefully about the range of texts they want to share with pupils. Pupils can confidently recall the plot of recent class texts they have read. They say that reading regularly enables them to increase their comprehension skills and widen their vocabulary.

Leaders have put in place a well-structured mathematics curriculum. Pupils say they like mathematics. Some, however, say it can be too challenging at times. In the early years, staff support the children well to develop their mathematical vocabulary.

They carefully plan opportunities for children to be successful. Pupils, including those with SEND, are provided with a range of resources to support their understanding.

Leaders are working systematically to identify what is taught and when across the wider curriculum. In physical education (PE) and music, they have identified clear sequences of learning, so pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. However, in some other subjects, the content teachers want pupils to know is not as well developed or sequenced. This prevents pupils from building on their prior knowledge. In addition, teachers do not check what pupils know well enough. As a result, they do not have a clear understanding of what pupils already know and can do to support the development of future learning.

Pupils with SEND thrive in a supportive environment. Staff know pupils well. They adapt learning for pupils with SEND effectively, including those with sensory needs. As a result, these pupils access the same learning as their peers.

Pupils know how the school expects them to behave. They have positive attitudes to their learning. Consequently, the school is a calm and purposeful place to learn. Pupils understand what bullying is. They know the difference between bullying and minor disagreements.

Leaders ensure that pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. Leaders provide experiences for pupils to become good citizens, including links with a local care home. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to be involved in a range of sporting opportunities and competition within the community. They are great ambassadors for the school. Older pupils can talk about what democracy is, however, younger pupils' understanding of British values is still evolving.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities, including in relation to safeguarding. They, alongside trust leaders, share the ambition of school leaders in wanting all pupils to succeed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff act in the best interests of keeping children safe. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained to be vigilant. Staff know what to do when they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders make swift decisions to support families in need of help. The support for vulnerable pupils is strong.

The school completes the necessary checks to ensure that all staff are safe to work with children. Pupils and parents agree the school is a safe place to be. Pupils learn how to stay safe through the curriculum. They talk confidently about how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some of the wider curriculum subjects, leaders have not mapped out the precise sequences of knowledge that pupils should learn and remember. Consequently, this inhibits pupils from building on their learning over time. Leaders need to ensure that sequences of work are broken down into relevant component parts so that pupils know more and remember more across all subjects.
- Assessment is not used consistently well to check pupils' knowledge. As a result, teachers are not always clear what pupils know and understand. Leaders need to ensure that systems and processes are in place so that teachers check and identify how well pupils know and remember the intended curriculum.

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	140780
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10227499
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	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ruth O'Donovan
Headteacher	Alan Frame
Website	www.stmarysswanage.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary is a smaller than average-sized primary school. It is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2021.
- 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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the education standards manager, groups of staff and representatives from the local governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors also spoke to curriculum leaders about other subjects including mathematics, PE and music.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads and pastoral worker to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding. An inspector also scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered 40 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, 38 responses to the pupil online survey and 22 responses to the staff survey. An inspector spoke to five parents at the start of the school day on the first day of inspection.

Inspection team

Heather Barraclough, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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