

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's CofE Primary School, East Grinstead

Windmill Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 2DS

Inspection dates:

8 to 9 June 2022

Outcome

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, East Grinstead continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff all talk about the caring nature of St Mary's. Pupils explain how this helps them to feel safe, secure and happy. Pupils value the excellent relationships they have with staff. They know that staff genuinely care about them. This helps them to grow in confidence. Pupils flourish, both academically and personally. They are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Pupils relish the wide range of interesting opportunities that are available. They enjoy clubs such as football, choir and drama. They also look forward to trips, including to the theatre in London and the local Ashdown Forest. Pupils take pride in the leadership roles and responsibilities they have. These include being a 'junior governor' and coordinating fundraising for tree-planting projects.

There is a strong sense of community. Pupils take pride in each other's achievements, both in and out of school. Teachers expect pupils to work hard, and pupils rise to these high expectations. Pupils work well together. They are polite and engaging, both in classes and around the school. Pupils are confident that if any negative behaviour, such as bullying, occurs, it is swiftly dealt with by staff.

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

Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum. This helps to build pupils' knowledge and to ignite their curiosity and appetite for learning. Reading is a central component in this process.

Pupils learn to read quickly and well. They are inspired by the enthusiasm shown for reading by their teachers. The teaching of phonics is regular and delivered by well-trained staff. Pupils practise their skills using books that are well matched to their needs. Those who need additional support to catch up or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. They learn and apply key skills with growing

confidence. Pupils enjoy reading and being read to. They can talk about authors and books that they like. This helps them to make informed selections from the well-stocked class libraries.

The mathematics curriculum has been carefully ordered so that pupils build knowledge of mathematical facts and methods. Pupils demonstrate a keen appetite for applying this knowledge to solving maths problems. They do this systematically and enthusiastically. Right from the start in early years, children develop secure mathematical foundations. Skilled staff use questions and play-based activities to explore and extend mathematical thinking. For example, a child using shapes to decorate a crown picture chatted to an adult and observed, 'A circle doesn't have any corners'.

In other subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. This helps teachers know what pupils need to know and remember. Rightly, leaders are currently refining this to better help pupils to understand what it means to be a geographer or artist, or to work scientifically. This includes considering how the curriculum in early years prepares children for future learning.

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders work closely with staff, parents and specialists to plan extra support for pupils. Staff carefully choose activities for pupils with SEND, so they can access the same learning as their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils are keen to demonstrate their understanding of the school's values of service, hope, responsibility, creativity, love and perseverance. They are curious about the wider world and positive about difference. Pupils learn about different faiths and family structures. They explained how, 'It's important to understand people'.

This philosophy underpins relationships across the school, which are warm and respectful. This in turn supports positive behaviours, which abound. Pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils, including children in early years, are polite and considerate towards one another. Classrooms are purposeful environments. Pupils are engaged in their learning.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel motivated and valued. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders to help manage their workload and well-being. Governors have a good understanding of the school. They work effectively with school leaders to help deliver an ambitious curriculum and a good quality of education for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. Regular updates and refreshers help to ensure that safeguarding is a priority. There is no complacency.

Pupils are well known. A caring ethos and strong relationships help to identify concerns quickly. Leaders act in a timely and, if necessary, tenacious way to respond to concerns, including making referrals if needed.

Risk is managed well. For example, the school entrance opens directly onto the car park. Leaders have carefully considered this and adapted the start of the school day to minimise potential danger. They have adapted the curriculum to respond to online awareness needs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is in the process of refining the curriculum in the foundation subjects. In its present form, it does not have sufficient clarity about how disciplinary knowledge is built across all subjects and is not fully linked to the early years curriculum. As a result, pupils are not developing a deep understanding within all subjects in the wider curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is clearly sequenced in all foundation subjects to support the development of subject-specific knowledge and to link sequences clearly to starting points in the early years foundation stage.

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 March 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

Unique reference number	126055
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10211526
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Francillia / Sylvia Hawken
Headteacher	Rachel Thorne
Website	www.stmaryseg.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England voluntary aided school. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) was in May 2016.
- The school does not currently 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with school leaders. The inspector met with governors and had telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector conducted deep dives into reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed curriculum planning with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to some pupils reading.

- Records associated with safeguarding were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about their safeguarding training and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff questionnaires.
- The inspector met with groups of staff to discuss their views about the school, including workload and well-being. The inspector met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons and around the school.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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