

# Inspection of St Mary's Junior Mixed School

St Mary's Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6HY

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 July 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

St. Mary's is a happy school where pupils enjoy learning. Pupils are welcoming and eager to share all the good things about their school. The school ethos of 'Care, believe, succeed' underpins all aspects of the school day.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and like playing with their friends. Adults expect pupils to work hard in lessons and they do. Pupils like the challenge set by teachers. They say that they do not think, 'I can't do it' but instead think, 'I can't do it yet'. Lessons are calm, which enables pupils to focus and work hard.

Pupils say they feel safe. They trust adults to look after them. They say bullying is very rare and if it should happen, adults deal with it straight away. Pupils conduct themselves well. They are polite, friendly and caring towards each other. There are respectful, positive relationships between pupils and adults.

Pupils enjoy the range of different clubs and sporting opportunities on offer. All pupils get the chance to represent the school at a sporting event. At breaktimes, pupils are active. They enjoy taking part in the different activities organised by the play leaders.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum to help pupils build up their knowledge over time. Pupils talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about what they are learning and what they have learned before.

Leaders have prioritised improving standards of reading. Staff have the expertise to deliver the reading curriculum well. Adults regularly check pupils' reading progress. They ensure that pupils who fall behind receive the support they need. The recently implemented phonics programme is helping these pupils to catch up. Books match the sounds pupils know. Most pupils read fluently and with confidence. Well-chosen books enable pupils to develop a love of reading. Older pupils have the skills to read widely. They talk about their reading with enthusiasm.

In most subjects, curriculum plans are in place well. They ensure that pupils revisit what they have learned before. This helps pupils to understand and remember more of their learning. Pupils quickly grasp new concepts when activities are well suited to their needs. Most teachers check learning well. This enables them to address misconceptions straight away and help pupils learn. On a few occasions, teachers miss opportunities to check learning. This means pupils' gaps in knowledge are not always addressed quickly enough.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They are motivated and have positive attitudes towards their learning. During lessons, they settle quickly and work cooperatively. Everyone

can get on with their learning. Occasionally, a few pupils lose their concentration, but adults quickly intervene to refocus them.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs accurately identified. Leaders are knowledgeable and train staff to support these pupils. They check how well pupils are doing and the impact of the support they are getting. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well. Parents of children with SEND say the school helps their children to 'thrive' and 'flourish'.

Pupils access a good-quality personal development curriculum. They learn about British values, such as democracy, by taking part in school elections. They learn about the importance of values such as tolerance, respect and equality. They learn the importance of valuing the differences between faiths, cultures and lifestyles.

However, some aspects of the personal development programme are not delivered as leaders intend. Most notably, while some pupils take on positions of responsibility, teachers do not ensure that there are wide-ranging opportunities for all pupils, as planned in the curriculum to develop leadership skills. Many pupils say they are keen to help and would like more opportunities to contribute to school life.

Governors and leaders work together to establish the school vision and values. Governors have the expertise which enables them to hold leaders to account. They undertake their statutory duties with confidence. Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils to have a high-quality education. They are focusing on the right priorities. Teachers feel supported and say leaders consider their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding shared by all adults, including governors. All have had recent safeguarding training. Everyone understands the procedures if they have a concern about a pupil. There are systems in place to check safeguarding procedures are robust.

Leaders know their pupils and families well. The pastoral team provides help and support to families when needed. Pupils trust the adults in school to keep them safe. They are confident adults would help them if needed. Pupils enjoy their lessons about relationships. These help to prepare them for secondary school.

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

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

- Teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding or identify misconceptions accurately or quickly enough in some subjects. This means that teachers do not always know precisely what pupils understand or what to teach

next. Leaders should ensure teachers adapt their teaching, so all pupils are able to be successful.

- There are too few opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility. Teachers do not ensure that all pupils get these opportunities as planned in the school's personal development curriculum. Leaders should make sure that the planned curriculum is fully implemented so that pupils get more opportunities to take on roles of responsibility and develop their leadership skills.

## 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>	117385
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212378
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	237
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rosemary Charsley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Samantha Britton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marysjm-baldock.herts.sch.uk">www.st-marysjm-baldock.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 and 12 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Junior School is a voluntary controlled school in the Diocese of St Albans.
- St Mary's school leaders do not use any providers of alternative education.

## 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, including the headteacher and governors. The inspectors also spoke to other leaders, staff, pupils, parents and the school's improvement partner from Hertfordshire.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and

looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading, this took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspectors also spoke to pupils in the lunch hall and on the playground.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, the inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school development plan, curriculum plans and school policies.
- The inspectors reviewed the 70 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and also considered the 52 free-text responses from parents. The inspectors also considered 18 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Karen Stanton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Charlie Fordham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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