

# Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Burnham-on-Crouch

Marsh Road, Marsh Rd, Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex CM0 8LZ

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Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

## **Outcome**

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Burnham-on-Crouch continues to be a good school.

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

Pupils at St Mary's Church of England school are happy and appreciate their teachers. They enjoy the ambitious curriculum and work that is set for them. Pupils strive to do their best. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils behave well and show respect through their understanding of each other's differences. Bullying is rare, but if it does happen, adults are quick to sort things out. Pupils say they are safe and know who to turn to if they have any worries.

Older pupils are proud to take on roles and responsibilities. Class ambassadors and learning forum representatives take their roles very seriously, for example by greeting visitors and explaining information about the school to make them feel welcome. Play leaders are also trained to support the younger children in the playground and while eating their lunch.

Working towards and taking part in local carnivals, sporting and musical events enables pupils to improve skills and successfully work as part of a team. The dedication pupils have shown outside of school has resulted in the school being recognised by the local mayor with an award.

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

Leaders have designed an interesting curriculum that is delivered lesson by lesson so that pupils achieve well. Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. They check that pupils have understood and can remember the content of each lesson. This is having a positive impact on pupils being able to write and talk about their learning.

Leaders have developed an effective assessment system. As part of this, staff make detailed notes on who has achieved well and what the next steps should be in reading, science and mathematics. The information collected informs the content of the next lesson and provides important information for subject leaders when reviewing the impact the curriculum is having. There is some variation with the use of these systems in a small number of the other subjects. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are not being followed up as effectively as they might be.

Leaders have ensured that the teaching of reading is a priority throughout the school. Pupils read books that contain the sounds they have learned. Pupils with gaps in what they know receive targeted support to improve their reading, fluency and understanding of the texts. Older pupils learn new vocabulary and are able to understand and use complex sentences well. Overall, the newly introduced phonics scheme is working well, but there are some inconsistencies. Where this is the case, lessons are not always well matched to the abilities of pupils. Leaders have reviewed where improvements are needed, and are supporting teachers to improve their expertise with further training.

Children in the early years get off to a good start and settle quickly into their learning routines. Children are supported by skilled adults to rehearse and remember new vocabulary and knowledge through carefully planned activities. This includes important foundational knowledge for English and mathematics. For example, pupils are taught the language they need to explain mathematical ideas and describe patterns. Children have opportunities to apply their knowledge through engaging number and shape activities in the classroom and outdoor area.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND, who access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. They are supported with useful adaptations to the teaching approaches staff use. Staff make effective use of external professional advice to support pupils with specific needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils are listened to, and their well-being is well considered. These factors, alongside high expectations, contribute to the good behaviour of pupils. Leaders provide a range of opportunities alongside the curriculum to enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world. For example, links with schools in New Zealand, Italy and the Czech Republic, support pupils to appreciate communities beyond Burnham.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the leaders and their support with managing workload. Parents are appreciative of the commitment from staff and leaders. As a result, a number of parents commented positively on the support their children had received, for example with strategies that support good mental health.

Governors ensure their statutory roles are fulfilled effectively. They have accessed training so they are able to check leaders' actions and successfully hold them to account. Governors have high expectations and are not afraid to challenge information presented to them. This results in them knowing the school well. Additionally, governors are supportive and routinely check on leaders' and staff's well-being.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are rigorous in their approach to making sure pupils are safe. Regular training means staff are up to date and know what signs to look out for and how to record any concerns. Record-keeping is thorough and analysed alongside behaviour and attendance records. Governors are tenacious in their monitoring of safeguarding arrangements.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. They are able to talk freely about issues that affect them or their friends. The culture of openness in the school means pupils do not shy away from sharing their feelings and concerns.

Recruitment checks on staff are carried out appropriately.

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

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

- There is some inconsistency in the teaching of the newly introduced phonics curriculum. Staff confidence and expertise in the delivery are variable. As a result, not all pupils learn to read as quickly as they could. Leaders must ensure that staff have the additional training and support to ensure the new elements of the phonics curriculum are implemented as effectively as the rest of the reading curriculum.
- There are some minor variations with the way staff use the assessment systems within some of the foundation subjects. This can lead to the gaps in pupils' knowledge not being addressed as efficiently as possible. Leaders should review this and ensure that teachers are trained in how leaders want assessments to be carried out, to support pupils to learn even more.

## 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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged, the school to be good in June 2016.

## 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.

## 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>	115159
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10193993
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	236
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Acting chair of governing body</b>	Lyn Baldock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Geraldine Denham-Hale
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysschoolburnham.org.uk">www.stmarysschoolburnham.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 and 29 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, new school building work had not been completed. Two classes were being taught temporarily in the hall and the computer suite.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been staff and leadership changes.
- St Mary's Church of England (VA) Primary School has a Christian character. The religious aspects of the school's provision were last inspected in January 2020 under section 48 of the Education Act, 2005
- Leaders do not use alternative providers.
- From September 2022, there has been an additional Reception class added to the school due to a rise in pupil numbers in the local area.

## 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and senior leaders. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the acting chair of the governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding practice, the inspector met with the headteacher, who is the school's designated safeguarding leader, the office manager and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons, to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.
- 60 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 60 free-text comments were considered. The inspector also took account of 29 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 99 responses to the pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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