

Inspection of a good school: St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Castle Avenue, Dover, Kent CT16 1EZ

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2022

Outcome

St Richard's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning. They describe St Richard's as a 'kind, respectful, exciting, fun and beautiful place to be, where we are loved.' Pupils thrive in a caring environment. Everyone is included, and encouraged to do their best. Expectations for all pupils are high. One parent said, 'The support that is available is above and beyond and you get a real sense that everyone in the school genuinely cares about the children.'

The school's values of forgiveness, honesty, hope, kindness, love and respect are at the heart of everything that the school does. Pupils get on well together and look out for each other. Pupils value the friendships they make at school. Children in Reception love having Year 6 buddies, who are good role models for the younger ones.

Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly. Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep safe when online. They and their parents and carers appreciate the secure gates into the school. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem. If they have concerns, they say that staff 'don't just listen to us, they hear us' and act quickly. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and trusting.

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

After the previous inspection, there was a significant decline in the school's performance. The new executive principal quickly identified the key priorities for improvement and took immediate and effective action. Supported well by other senior leaders and the trust, the two principals have worked tirelessly to ensure that the quality of education is good.

Leaders are relentless and unwavering in their commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve well. Leaders have instilled a culture of more regular attendance. Improved attendance has made a significant contribution to pupils' achievement and attitudes to school. Pupils are encouraged to have self-belief and to be aspirational. They respond positively to praise from adults for doing the right thing and trying their best. Leaders are determined that pupils have opportunities to broaden their experiences beyond their

immediate environment and culture. These include a range of clubs, enrichment and community activities and links with other schools in the trust. One parent described how pupils had taken part in 'a whole host of activities, from dressing up as adjectives to celebrating Bastille Day'.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very effectively. Staff have a clear understanding of their needs and ensure that pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers. Staff provide sensitive and effective guidance to help pupils who may find it more difficult to manage their feelings and behaviour. Staff prioritise developing pupils' vocabulary and communication to build pupils' confidence and fluency when speaking. This helps all pupils, particularly those who speak English as an additional language.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious and enables all pupils to achieve and succeed. Teachers know the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. Teachers usually check pupils' understanding and help pupils to remember over time what it is they have been taught and know. This helps pupils to learn new information. However, this is not as consistent in a few subjects as it is in English, mathematics and science.

Children settle very quickly and happily into the routines and expectations in Reception and make rapid gains in their learning. On occasion, what children know in Reception is not always consistently acknowledged in the curriculum thinking as they move into subject learning in key stage 1.

Reading is taught well. Pupils learn phonics skills very effectively through a well-organised and structured programme. It begins as soon as children start in Reception. Children quickly learn new sounds and have fun learning. They read books that match the sounds they know and enjoy listening to stories and sharing books. Regular assessment identifies those pupils who need extra help so they can catch up quickly.

Teachers inspire children from the start of Reception to love books. Teachers introduce pupils to a wide range of high-quality texts. A love of reading is fostered very effectively. Pupils develop as confident, enthusiastic and fluent readers to help them learn in all subjects.

Staff appreciate working in a very supportive team. They are led by highly effective school leaders and the trust team. Staff feel valued and proud to work at the school. They appreciate the care that leaders have taken to manage their workload and support their well-being. Committee members and trust directors share the school leaders' vision and aspirations.

Parents are very supportive of the school and its leadership. One parent wrote, 'There is an openness in communication that means I feel fully involved and informed with everything that is going on in school.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding and understand their responsibilities. Trust and school leaders ensure that there are appropriate checks on the suitability of staff. Staff know pupils and their families very well and swiftly identify any child who may be at risk. They know what to do to report any concerns. Leaders are resolute and take decisive action. They liaise closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. Visitors to school, such as the police, help pupils learn to be safe in and out of school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teaching does not consistently help pupils to remember explicitly the content they have been taught. This means that it is not always possible for pupils to build on their knowledge to support new learning. Leaders need to ensure that teaching helps pupils to remember and build on what they know, so they learn effectively in all subjects.
- In some subjects, the curriculum design does not always acknowledge the skills and knowledge children learn in Reception as a foundation for subject learning in key stage 1. This means that pupils' learning is not always as rapid as it could be as they move into key stage 1. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum planning builds on learning in early years.

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 October 2017.

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

Unique reference number	141497
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241984
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	192
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Powis
Principal	Lisa Huotari (Executive Principal) Colin Taylor (Academy Principal)
Website	www.st-richards.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Richard's is one of 25 schools in the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership Multi-Academy Trust.
- The executive principal leads Stella Maris Catholic Primary School in Folkestone as well as St Richard's. She joined the school in January 2021.
- The academy principal joined St Richard's in April 2021.
- As a Catholic school, St Richard's is part of the Diocese of Southwark. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in November 2018.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive principal and the academy principal, the special educational needs coordinator, other leaders and staff. The inspector met with the chair

of the trust board, members of the academy committees (including the chief executive officer of the trust), the school improvement adviser and other executive officers.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum planning in some other subjects and observed some pupils reading to their teachers or teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. She looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, the inspector considered and checked the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including school development plans and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. She talked to pupils formally and informally about their learning, about what behaviour is like and whether they feel safe at school.
- The inspector considered the responses from Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and parents, and spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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