

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

St Richard's Road, Deal, Kent CT14 9LF

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is an inclusive school with a strong family feel. It is a welcoming, supportive and caring place to be. One parent summed up the views of many by saying: 'St. Mary's is an inclusive, welcoming family. My children have thrived at the school in terms of academic, emotional and spiritual learning.'

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are encouraged to do their best because staff expectations for pupils' learning are high. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They work hard and build their resilience to 'stick at it' if they find something tricky. Pupils are polite and friendly and interested in each other's views. They value the friendships they make at school.

There is a calm, orderly and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils behave very well. This starts in the early years where children learn to share, take turns and behave positively. There is a strong culture of respect, tolerance and kindness. Pupils feel safe. Bullying or unkind behaviour is rare. Pupils are confident to raise any worries they might have and staff deal with any issues well. Pupils are encouraged to be leaders and they take their roles and responsibilities seriously.

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

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and engaging, and pupils achieve well. Leaders have chosen a curriculum that inspires and motivates and meets the interests of all pupils from Reception to Year 6. Leaders are determined that pupils have opportunities to broaden and enrich their experiences. They set great store on providing activities for pupils to develop cultural and social skills. These include a range of clubs, enrichment and community activities. Pupils understand and respect difference. They told inspectors that it was important to respect others' language, culture and learning needs.

The curriculum is organised so that, in all subjects, teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. This means that teachers know the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and remember well. In mathematics, for example, children in Reception have a wealth of opportunities to develop their confidence and understanding of numbers. Staff are quick to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND learn well because staff support them very effectively. This means they can experience success and achieve their best.

Teachers and subject leaders have good subject knowledge. Staff benefit from support and guidance from subject leaders, including the several teachers who are new to the school. Teachers check pupils' understanding and use this information to inform their teaching. Leaders have a clear, shared view of how the curriculum

should most effectively be taught, but it is not consistently embedded across the school. This means that pupils do not always remember the important information they need to build their skills and knowledge. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is constantly highly effective.

Leaders, governors and the trust team have high expectations and are aware of areas where further work is needed. Leaders are aware that while some staff feel well supported, some feel that senior leaders could take more account of their workload. This is particularly felt when new initiatives are introduced and for the leadership of subjects. However, leaders listen to staff and take action to take account of their concerns.

Reading is a high priority. Leaders support staff well to ensure that they have the confidence and expertise to teach phonics effectively. From the start of the early years, children enjoy rhymes, stories and songs. They try hard, concentrate well and learn new sounds quickly. Pupils respond well to the structure of the school's phonics programme and learn phonics skills well. They learn how to segment and blend to enable them to read unfamiliar words. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know, which helps them to practise reading and become increasingly fluent.

Leaders place great importance on pupils developing a love of reading. The recent redesign of the library has motivated and inspired pupils in their reading choices. The approach to reading for older pupils is relatively new. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and frequently. They enjoy the discussions they have in reading lessons. This helps them to understand the meaning and the structure of the texts they are studying. Pupils say, 'It helps us to really understand the vocabulary, the characters and the authors' intention.' Leaders keep a close check on the phonics and reading curriculum to make sure that pupils learn as well as they can.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide regular, effective training for all staff so they understand how to keep pupils safe. Staff know pupils very well. This means they are quickly alert to any changes which may indicate that a child is at risk of harm. Staff know the procedures to follow if they identify a concern. Any necessary action is taken swiftly.

Leaders liaise closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Governors diligently assure themselves that safeguarding is effective. Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have a clear, shared, consistent view of how the ambitious and inspiring curriculum should be taught, but this is not consistently applied. This means that, sometimes, pupils' understanding of key concepts and their ability to remember what they have been taught are not as secure as they could be. Leaders need to develop and manage teachers' pedagogical knowledge. This is to ensure that it reflects the school's ambitious curriculum. Leaders need to establish clear expectations so that the delivery of the curriculum is consistently highly effective and pupils achieve highly.

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	141065
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10227931
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Powis
Principal	Maria Pullen (Academy Principal) Karen Riddell (Executive Principal)
Website	www.stmarysdeal.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is one of 25 schools in the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership Multi-Academy Trust.
- The executive principal leads St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Aylesham as well as St Mary's.
- The executive principal and the academy principal were both appointed to their roles in 2019.
- There is a relatively new team of staff. Four of the class teachers joined the school in September 2021 and two joined in September 2022.
- As a Catholic school, it is part of the Diocese of Southwark. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in October 2022.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 executive principal, the academy principal and the assistant academy principal, other leaders and staff. An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust board and the school improvement adviser. An inspector met with members of the governing body from the executive board and academy committees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and art and design. For each deep dive, an 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 inspectors also looked at curriculum information in some other subjects and observed some pupils reading to their teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. An inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, inspectors considered and checked the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school development plans and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. They talked to pupils formally and informally about their learning, what behaviour is like and whether they felt safe at school.
- Inspectors considered the responses from Ofsted's online survey for staff, parents and pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector

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