

# Inspection of St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Stoney Lane, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 2LX

---

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

---

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

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

Pupils enjoy, and are very proud to attend, St Mary's. They feel safe because the staff give them a high level of support. Pupils talk about this with much appreciation. This high level of care is at the heart of everything staff do for pupils and families. Parents recognise this, as summed up by one who told inspectors: 'St Mary's is a very nurturing and supportive school. I feel happy sending my child to this school.'

Pupils behave well throughout the school day. They are polite and courteous. They are well-mannered, and always ready to open doors to adults. Pupils are kind to one another. They understand what bullying is and say there is little of it at St Mary's. Pupils say staff quickly deal with the rare incidents of bullying. All members of the school community are respectful of one another.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. However, the school's curriculum has some weaknesses. This means that pupils' knowledge of the curriculum is not strong. Recent changes are leading to improvements, but there is still much to do in some subjects, and in parts of the school. Younger children do not learn to read as well as they could. Too many pupils have poor attendance. Leaders recognise these concerns and are taking action.

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

Leaders have recently made big changes to the curriculum. This was necessary as pupils had gaps in their knowledge. Things are improving, as pupils' work is better matched to what they already know and tasks now help pupils to learn. Pupils talk with greater understanding about recent work in science and geography. However, they have considerable gaps in their knowledge from previous years in these and other subjects. These gaps make it difficult for pupils to understand their recent work. Teachers do not adjust their teaching well to help pupils when this happens.

Some subjects need further improvement. For example, in English, the writing curriculum is not well organised. It does not give pupils opportunities to practise new knowledge to help them confidently use it. Some of the tasks pupils are given do not help them learn the curriculum. Pupils' handwriting is not of a high standard.

The curriculum for the early years foundation stage is not fully in place. This means that staff are not always aware of what children have learned before. The curriculum does not help children gain a strong level of knowledge and skills across all areas of learning.

Younger children do not learn to read as quickly as they could. This is because some staff lack the knowledge to teach phonics well and do not have high enough expectations of what children could achieve. Older pupils are developing a love of reading. A selection of books, recently introduced by the subject leader, are sparking their interest in reading. Pupils also enjoy reading books at home.

Some subjects are stronger, particularly mathematics. This is because the mathematics curriculum is better organised. Teachers use assessment to check pupils' knowledge, and adapt their teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise in mathematics are strong.

Pupils behave well in lessons, so their learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils are always keen to learn and show a positive attitude to their work.

Many pupils do not attend school regularly. This has been the case for some time. Too many pupils are frequently absent from school. Leaders have systems in place but pupils' regular attendance remains a concern.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils enjoy responsibilities such as being house captains or being involved in the eco-council. The curriculum helps pupils to form mature attitudes towards people whose lifestyles are different. Pupils talk knowledgeably about different cultures and religions. They understand fundamental British values and talk confidently about occasions when they have taken part in school elections.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. These pupils receive tailored support, based on their needs. Some pupils with specific needs receive help through programmes to support their mental health.

The headteacher has successfully managed many recent changes to the staff team. With other leaders, she has maintained some strong practice. Improved and more consistent practice is increasingly evident in the curriculum. Leaders have improved teachers' subject knowledge in many subjects through training, while implementing the revised curriculum.

Staff speak highly of the support leaders provide around their workload and are very proud to work at St Mary's.

Governors keep a close watch on the school's performance, asking questions and providing support to leaders. Governors understand and perform their duties well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders deal expertly with safeguarding. Leaders know families well, keeping a watchful eye on concerns. They provide a high level of support when problems happen. Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that all organisations play their role in keeping pupils safe. Leaders provide comprehensive training to staff which helps them to identify any concerns. Safeguarding is woven through the curriculum and helps pupils to recognise risks and keep safe. Governors keep a close watch on this area and, with leaders, ensure that safeguarding remains a priority and strength of the school.

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

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

- The curriculum has not been ambitious or well sequenced. Pupils therefore have gaps in their knowledge and can find the school's new curriculum difficult. Leaders should make further refinements to the curriculum, including in the early years foundation stage, and support teachers to adapt their teaching to take account of these gaps. This will help to ensure that pupils are taught a challenging, well-sequenced curriculum which helps them to achieve well.
- Staff's subject knowledge in phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is not strong. As a result, children's and pupils' knowledge of phonics does not help them to read well. Leaders should ensure that staff have the expertise to teach the phonics curriculum effectively, and have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils therefore do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should continue to work with parents so that pupils attend school more regularly.

## 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>	135057
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241992
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Valerie Houghton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Perrett
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmaryscevaprimary.co.uk">www.stmaryscevaprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school. Its most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (section 48) took place in November 2019. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school has a Nursery class for two- and three-year-old children, who attend for either mornings, afternoons or full time.
- The school provides nursery provision for pupils with speech and language needs.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not 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 held meetings with senior leaders from the school and members of the governing body. They spoke to advisers from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics, English, science and geography. As part of this, inspectors visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed their work. Inspectors also met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke to pupils about their reading.
- Through discussions with leaders, pupils and staff, inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding. Inspectors looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks for staff and checks on relevant qualifications.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktime. Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about behaviour, their workload and their well-being. Inspectors considered responses from staff to the Ofsted survey.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils at different times of the school day to consider their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's survey for parents, including written comments.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Moore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Hughes

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022