

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Junior Academy

Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norwich, Norfolk NR15 2UY

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. They have positive relationships with staff. They know what bullying is. They say that there are fewer incidents of bullying taking place because they are now dealt with quickly by leaders. Pupils are confident to share any concerns with adults because they trust them to help.

Pupils are expected to behave sensibly. Pupils say that there has been a greater focus on the school rules, such as 'Ready - Safe - Respectful' and 'Give me 5'. As a result, they feel behaviour is getting better. However, while most try their best to follow the behaviour rules, some do not behave well enough.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs after school and at lunchtime, some of which they lead themselves, such as drama. Some pupils benefit from taking on roles and responsibilities, such as being a librarian or a prefect, but some of the broader work to develop pupils' understanding of the society in which they live is at an early stage.

Pupils enjoy learning about different topics in subjects, such as science and geography, but the quality of education is not good enough.

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

Leaders ensure pupils access a broad curriculum. They have identified what they want pupils to learn in each subject. However, teachers vary in the degree to which they teach this well. Some do not adopt leaders' chosen approaches. Some struggle with adapting leaders' plans for the different ages of pupils they teach. While teachers do check on pupils' learning, this is not always effective in preventing some pupils from falling behind.

Many subject leaders are new to their role. They are being supported by the trust to develop the skills and subject knowledge they need in order to improve the curriculum areas for which they are responsible. However, this is a work in progress. At present, some subject leaders do not know which aspects of the curriculum are being taught well and which are not. Consequently, they are not in a position to make the necessary improvements.

Leaders prioritise reading throughout the school. They make sure pupils follow a reading programme as they move through the older year groups. This ensures pupils access high quality and challenging texts. Leaders recently revamped the library to encourage more pupils to engage with the wider range of texts available. Pupils are enthused by the change. Pupils who struggle with reading, including those that are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational and/or disabilities (SEND), receive effective support to help them catch up. These pupils are becoming increasingly confident and fluent in their reading.

Leaders have prioritised work that ensures all pupils who need to be are included on the SEND register. Pupils with SEND are provided with appropriate support. Staff throughout school are receiving training to develop their own practice because, at present, some staff do not know how to support pupils with SEND well.

Pupils' behaviour is not as good as it should be. Some pupils are disrespectful to their peers and adults. Leaders have brought in a new behaviour policy and this is beginning to have a positive impact. Staff are more consistent in how they manage inappropriate behaviour. There are fewer reports of negative behaviour. Pupils know about the rewards and sanctions set out for them. Pupils' behaviour is beginning to improve.

Leaders use the curriculum to support pupils' understanding of responsibilities, respect and citizenship. However, this work is at an early stage. While pupils learn about respect and to understand others different from themselves, they struggle to remember what they have learned about other faiths and beliefs. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs available to them. At present, however, there are limited opportunities for younger pupils to take on roles and responsibilities outside the classroom.

Leaders are working to develop the range of enrichment activities that support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders are connecting experiences beyond the classroom to the wider curriculum, so that pupils can build on these experiences over time. This is motivating pupils to learn. For example, pupils in Year 4 described how excited they are about an up-coming trip to visit a Roman castle.

Leaders and trust board members know the weaknesses in the school and are working at pace to improve this. They are ambitious in their vision for the school. Staff are appreciative of leaders' actions and ambitions and recognise that the school is on a journey. Staff are now clear about what actions are needed to ensure the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding and clear on the risks that pupils may face. They work closely with families. They work with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive appropriate support to keep them safe.

Leaders make all appropriate checks on those employed by the school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They learn about the potential dangers that they may face online. Pupils can talk confidently about the different ways to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not teach leaders' curriculum well. As a result, some pupils are not making enough progress. Leaders should ensure all teachers deliver the curriculum in the way leaders intend.
- Nearly all subject leaders are new to post. They have not evaluated their subjects. As a result, they do not know what is going well and what actions are needed to improve the delivery of the curriculum. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the support and expertise to make checks on how well the school's curriculum is implemented and the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning.
- Aspects of leaders' work to support pupils' personal development have not had sufficient impact. Pupils are not as well equipped for life in modern Britain as they should be. Leaders need to ensure that pupils have the knowledge and understanding they need of fundamental British values.
- While leaders' work to improve behaviour has had a positive effect, some pupils still do not behave as well as they should. There is disrespectful behaviour, and some pupils are worried about the behaviour of others, particularly at playtimes. Leaders, must ensure that pupils behave well throughout the school day.

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	137311
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10252775
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	Trust board
Chair of Transition Board	Richard Cranmer
Headteacher	Adam Riley
Website	www.stmaryscoejunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school has been a member of St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust since September 2021.
- The school is federated with Newton Flotman Primary Academy. The executive headteacher and executive deputy headteacher lead both schools and have been in post since September 2022. Over the last few years, there have been several changes of senior leadership in the school.
- The school is a Church of England school and received a section 48 inspection on 4 October 2017. The school's provision was judged to be good by this inspection.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and science.
- For each deep dive, 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. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including personal, social and health education and history.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and a number of other leaders, including the leader for SEND.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the St Benet's Academy Trust.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including records of academy review meetings, the school's self-evaluation document and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, reviewed records, and spoke to the designated safeguarding lead, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils, including at breaktimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by speaking to several of them at the beginning of a school day and by reviewing the 22 responses and 9 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them.

Inspection team

Jo Nutbeam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tim McLoughlin

Ofsted Inspector

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