

Inspection of a good school: St Marie's School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Fulwood Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S10 3DQ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 November 2022

Outcome

St Marie's School, A Catholic Voluntary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Marie's is a nurturing school where leaders and staff care passionately about the whole school community. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well in curriculum subjects. This is because every member of staff has high expectations of the pupils they teach. The school has created a curriculum model that is enhanced by many wider opportunities. These include sporting competitions and educational visits.

Pupils behave well and talk about how the behaviour policy prepares them for life in modern Britain. They believe that everybody has the right to make their own choices as long as they are not harming anybody else. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare. Where allegations of bullying occur, they are taken seriously by school leaders and investigated thoroughly. Pupils trust adults and know they will help them if they are feeling worried. They say that they do not hear other pupils using derogatory language towards each other. Pupils are safe and happy in school.

Pupils enjoy performing. They frequently get the opportunity to play instruments, sing and share small productions in theatres in their local area. Pupils also thrive on being given areas of responsibility. They are proud to share their ideas in school council meetings, and liturgy leaders enjoy supporting leaders with collective worship.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. It is aspirational for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Leaders make sure that learning is sequenced to build on what pupils have learned previously. This helps pupils to develop a secure range of knowledge and skills across the curriculum. The early years leader has considered carefully the different areas of learning for the very youngest children. As a result, children in early years are very well prepared for key stage 1.

Pupils' eyes light up when they talk about reading. They are eager to share their opinions about the books they are reading and their views on the work of different authors. This stems from the passion that staff have for reading. In the early years, learning to read is a priority. Well-organised groups and structured lessons ensure that pupils learn sounds that develop children's reading over time. Staff are highly trained and supported regularly by the reading leader to ensure the teaching of phonics is strong. However, on occasion, assessment information is not used effectively and pupils are not moved on to the next stage of phonic blending quickly enough.

Leaders have implemented a well-planned and sequenced mathematics curriculum. Pupils are given time to practise what they have been taught so they develop fluency. The vocabulary that pupils use in mathematics is expansive. For example, pupils in Year 2 know about commutative equations and can explain what they are. However, pupils are not always given the opportunity to explain their thinking independently and, on occasion, are asked to complete too many steps within a single question. This can be confusing for pupils as they struggle to apply prior knowledge successfully.

It is clear that music plays a prominent role in the life of the school. The bespoke curriculum model has been designed to ensure religious events such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated through child-led performances. Pupils are routinely given the opportunity to sing and play instruments as part of ensembles. This is something that they enjoy. The school has pathways for talented musicians to further develop their skills.

Leaders are determined that pupils' wider development is at the heart of everything the school does. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe online and how to stay healthy, both physically and mentally. Pupils know that relationships are based on mutual respect. They are provided with opportunities to debate, which helps them to accept the opinions of other people. Pupils are also introduced to different professions to provide them with aspirations for the future.

Provision for pupils with SEND is a strength of the school. Identification is strong and external agencies are used well to offer advice and guidance. Bespoke pathways are created for pupils and the curriculum is adapted well to meet their needs. Parents are fully involved in the process. As a result, SEND pupils achieve well.

Staff are happy at the school and feel like they are part of a family. They are well supported by leaders and workload is always considered. School leaders receive strong support from the trustees and local governing body. Both know the school well and offer appropriate levels of support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all adults are trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Regular briefings as well as key training ensure that staff have a solid understanding of the risks that pupils at this school might face. Quizzes to check staff's understanding of policy and procedure are well used by leaders. Systems for reporting and recording concerns are established.

Leaders work with families, early help partners and external services to actively support pupils and their families.

Leaders have implemented a system where the whole community can alert the school to anything they are worried about. A 'whisper' button on their website allows parents, pupils and members of the local community the opportunity to report their concerns. This is then picked up and addressed by leaders at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always use assessment information in phonics accurately. This means that pupils are not moved on to the next stages of reading quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that staff consistently use assessment information accurately, in order to identify when pupils are ready to move on and monitor the curriculum to check it is meeting the needs of all pupils. This will ensure that pupils develop their reading knowledge more quickly.
- In mathematics, pupils are sometimes given independent tasks with too many component parts. This overloads their working memory and means that some pupils cannot successfully complete their task. Leaders should ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is consistent across the school so pupils can apply prior knowledge successfully.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2013.

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	138848
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10240311
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	216
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Candida Jane Calvert
Headteacher	John Fernandes
Website	www.st-maries.sheffield.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the St Clare Multi Academy Trust in September 2022.
- The school uses one alternative provision.

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 leaders. This has been taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, and curriculum leaders.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also observed adults listening to pupils read.

- The arrangements for safeguarding were checked. This included checks on the single central record, staff training and safeguarding records. The inspector also talked to the designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector discussed the school's records on attendance and behaviour with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime. He also met with two groups of pupils.
- The inspector looked at the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plans.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils in lessons and at breaktimes, and took into account the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- The inspector took into account the responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View.
- The inspector met with staff and considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Simon McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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