

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Mary's CofE (VC) J and I School

Mill Bank, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire HX6 3EJ

Inspection date: 10 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and love learning at this nurturing school. Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well. They are determined that each child's journey through school will excite and engage them. The staff team works hard to ensure that this school is filled with both learning and laughter. Inspectors experienced the strong and caring ethos that permeates the school. Parents also see this. One said, 'I can see how well my children are doing at St Mary's and I am very happy they attend this school.'

Leaders have increasingly high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Some areas of the curriculum that pupils currently receive would benefit from greater refinements to ensure they are as effectively planned and implemented as possible. This, in turn, will support pupils' learning even more successfully.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during playtimes. They know the school's behaviour code well, and follow this with only an occasional reminder from adults. Pupils feel well supported and know that staff will listen if they have any concerns. Leaders promptly deal with any incidents of bullying, should they occur.

Pupils are proud of their school. They are keen to take on different responsibilities, for example acting as school councillors, eco-warriors and prefects. They enjoy a range of extra opportunities, such as those which encourage creative, technical and sporting competence. These opportunities enhance their learning and foster their talents.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has been through a period of significant change. Governors have established the Calderdale Village Schools Federation and have appointed

a new executive headteacher and a head of school. The appointments of new teachers and other adults have completed the team.

Newly appointed leaders have been instrumental in developing a vision for the school's curriculum. The new curriculum plans in English and mathematics are helping teachers to plan and deliver lessons that enable them to teach subject content in a clear, well-considered sequence. This has helped pupils to remember what they are taught. In subjects such as history, plans are not as well developed, and would benefit from further refinement. Subject leads new to the role are in the early stages of checking how well their subjects are being delivered and, consequently, pupils cannot be confirmed to achieve as well in the wider curriculum areas as they do in mathematics and English.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Displays around the school promote a love of books, and daily story time gives pupils in all classes the chance to listen to high-quality texts. Books are carefully chosen to match pupils' ability and interests and complement learning across the curriculum. The school's phonics programme has been implemented for some time and is well embedded. Staff receive regular training and coaching so they continue to deliver the programme well. As a result, pupils do well in reading. Leaders check which pupils need more help. In phonics lessons, pupils who need extra support work with staff to help them to acquire and remember sounds. The books that pupils read are well matched to their phonic stage of development.

Children in the early years settle quickly and live up to the high expectations of their teachers. They relish learning and work well together for sustained periods. Children are able to share resources and communicate their ideas effectively. There is a strong culture of respect, which fosters quality conversations and thoughtful learners. Teachers in other year groups capitalise on this good start. This ensures that the solid foundations achieved in reading and mathematics are built on throughout key stages 1 and 2.

Pupils behave well at school. A few pupils struggle to independently maintain their concentration, and occasionally this distracts others. Staff help pupils to recognise what acceptable behaviour is. If any concerning behaviours arise, teachers and leaders act decisively. They support pupils to understand the impact of their actions. Leaders provide pupils with a range of activities, which include a varied menu of inter-school sports opportunities, singing with a vast choir of children from the region and staying away from home on school trips.

Older pupils talk knowledgeably about what they have learned in their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils in Year 6. These pupils demonstrated a firm understanding of difference and the need to treat everyone equally. They have good knowledge of how to keep themselves and others safe, discussing the risks of criminal and sexual exploitation with maturity.

Adults delight in working in this small village school and within the federation of two schools. They appreciate the high levels of collaboration and support that they receive from their colleagues across the valley. This valuable working relationship benefits pupils greatly. Governors continue to be instrumental in moving the federation forward. Their passion and commitment to the school is tangible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults are trained in safeguarding. They know their pupils and families well and are alert to any signs that a child might be at risk. They know how to report any concerns that they may have. Those responsible for safeguarding act swiftly when concerns are raised. Leaders keep thorough records and liaise with other agencies, where appropriate, to provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils feel safe at St Mary's. They learn about safety online and offline in computing and in PSHE lessons. They know what to do if they are worried about their own or their friends' safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have a clear vision for the curriculum. At present, the school's curriculum is not yet as well planned in foundation subjects, such as history. Leaders should ensure new curriculum plans are well embedded so that pupils' knowledge develops effectively over time in all subjects.
- Some subject leaders are new to their role. They have not yet fully evaluated their curriculum to identify how well pupils are building their new knowledge over time. As a result, subject leaders do not have all the information they need to contribute fully to further improving the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that new subject leaders have the training, support and guidance they need to fulfil their roles effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in February 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	107538
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10255760
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Franklin-Smith
Executive headteacher	Yvette Sullivan
Website	http://www.st-marys.calderdale.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is one of two schools in the Calderdale Village Schools Federation, which was formed in September 2020.
- The school's executive headteacher works across two schools in the federation. There is also a head of school, who works at St Mary's CofE (VC) J and I School full time.
- The school was judged to be outstanding at its most recent inspection of denominational education and the content of the school's collective worship under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place on 4 July 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of the previous section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision for its current pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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 headteacher, the head of school and subject leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents, including improvement planning, a range of policies, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and design and history. They reviewed curriculum planning, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses from parents to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also met with parents in person. They reviewed the responses of staff who took part in Ofsted's staff survey and spoke to groups of staff. Inspectors reviewed the responses of pupils who responded to the pupil survey.
- The lead inspector spoke to members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors met with groups of boys and girls from Year 6 to talk about safety and well-being.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding documents, including the single central record, records of staff's safeguarding training and samples of the school's child protection records.

Inspection team

Marcus Newby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Beaumont

His Majesty's Inspector

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