

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

St James House, St Mary's Wharf, Mansfield Road, Derby DE1 3AD

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This school's mission is to unlock all pupils' potential by 'sharing God's love and making a difference'. Pupils show kindness and respect to each other. They are keen to play a positive role in their community.

Pupils live up to teachers' high expectations. Pupils' behaviour and conduct are exemplary. In lessons, they learn without distraction. Pupils have confidence that teachers will keep them safe. They say that bullying is rare. Pupils describe St Mary's as 'a family'. Pupils from all faiths, families and cultures are welcome and celebrated.

Leaders provide rich and meaningful ways to develop pupils' personal development and character. St Mary's 'SPIRIT' is central to this. Equality ambassadors promote fairness. The 'circle of friends' helps their peers to make and then sustain friendships. Countless activities take place to raise funds for local and national charities. Pupils take on leadership roles, such as leading worship, chairing committees and acting as treasurer. They write to the headteacher if they have an idea or a concern. Pupils take pride in improving their school. They 'make a difference to themselves and others'.

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

Leaders have expertly managed the school during an unprecedented period of challenge. Despite tremendous difficulty, they have kept the school community together.

The curriculum is well planned. Leaders have focused on the key knowledge they want pupils to learn. Pupils' learning is carefully built upon what they know and can do. Pupils often acquire new knowledge that they confidently understand. They develop a rich vocabulary.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use assessment skilfully to check pupils' understanding. Pupils have regular opportunities to recall previous learning. This supports them to make links to new knowledge. Teachers often adapt learning to make sure that pupils learn well. This is done more skilfully in some subjects than in others.

The teaching of reading is a priority. There is a well-planned and sequenced phonics programme in place. Teachers quickly identify pupils who need extra help. These pupils receive expert additional support. Pupils achieve very well in reading.

The library was destroyed in the school fire. All books were lost. Staff have been unwavering in their determination to 'get books back in the hands of pupils'. Pupils have access to a wide range of books. They are introduced to different authors and texts. Additionally, books reflect the rich and diverse school population.

Children in the early years have an outstanding start. They receive an ambitious curriculum taught by knowledgeable specialists. Children are completely engrossed in their learning. They understand routines well. They learn to be independent. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.

The impact of the school fire has been particularly significant for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have experienced a great deal of disruption. There has been a lot of change. This has been extremely unsettling for pupils with SEND and their families. Leaders have worked hard to make sure that pupils, particularly pupils with an education, health and care plan, receive the expert support that they need. Pupils with SEND achieve well in school.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. Attendance continues to improve.

Pupils benefit from a thoughtfully planned and structured personal, social and health education curriculum. The curriculum considers the local context. This helps to keep pupils well-informed and safe. The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. The teaching of protected characteristics is a strength. There is celebration of the Catholic faith but also the culture and faith of others. This meets leaders' ambition of 'building mutual respect and tolerance'.

Staff have worked together as a strong team. They feel appreciated and supported. They are rightly proud of their achievements. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know children and their families and carers extremely well. The family liaison officer works tirelessly to ensure that positive relationships are built. Her work is helping to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are in school, are safe and are learning.

Staff are well trained. They know the actions needed to support the most vulnerable pupils. Staff are vigilant. They tenaciously ensure that pupils are safe in the temporary school.

The single central record of staff meets statutory requirements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is expertly planned. In a few subjects, this expert planning is not suitably adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that some pupils do

not acquire the knowledge and skills that they could. Leaders must make sure that the curriculum across all subjects is implemented securely and consistently to meet the needs of all learners.

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	146140
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10254853
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Noon
Headteacher	Amanda Greaves
Website	stmarys-derby.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The original school building was destroyed by fire in October 2020. Pupils are currently educated in temporary accommodation in central Derby.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school provides Nursery provision for three-year-olds.
- The most recent Diocesan Canonical Inspection took place in March 2018.

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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders to discuss their evaluation of the quality of education. The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer of the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi

Academy Trust. The lead inspector also met with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, art and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors heard pupils read.
- Inspectors also met with the subject leaders of English, history and modern foreign languages. They reviewed the curriculum plans for these subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the early years leader. They reviewed the early years and Nursery provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils during the school day as they moved around the school. They observed lunchtime and playtime. They spoke to groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and family liaison officer to discuss the actions taken to keep children safe. She reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of staff. The lead inspector looked at information about the actions taken to protect the most vulnerable pupils. She reviewed information relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The views of parents and staff were considered.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Atkins	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Heery	Ofsted Inspector

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