

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Shackleford Road, Shackleford, Godalming, Surrey GU8 6AE

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love the longstanding traditions at St Mary's. Teachers immerse pupils in the natural world and make excellent use of the picturesque rural surroundings. Pupils are very lucky to have unique experiences that they will remember for years to come. They spend time at the farm directly opposite and take part in village heritage such as country dancing. There are opportunities to cook regularly and go on memorable school trips. Pupils are part of a caring community where they feel safe and at ease.

Happiness can be seen in pupils' eagerness to learn and when playing outside. Many pupils comment about kindness. Everyone looks out for each other, and new pupils settle in quickly. Bullying does not worry pupils because it rarely happens.

New leaders have lifted expectations of pupils' education. Teachers are rising to the challenge in delivering a new and improved curriculum. Pupils have a 'love for learning' and want to know more. Leaders have set higher behaviour standards and pupils show that they do the right thing.

Pupils are naturally curious, and adults really foster pupils' creativity. Pupils enjoy celebrating achievements and look forward to the weekly 'Well Done Awards' and cake raffle. They are committed to being global citizens.

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

Since her arrival, the executive headteacher has reignited staff's ambition in wanting the very best for every pupil. Renewed policies and clarity around implementing these are enabling a greater consistency across the school. The collaborative, close-knit staff have welcomed the new direction and professional development opportunities. Nevertheless, senior leaders recognise there is work to do in helping subject leaders to understand what they should be focusing on to have the greatest impact for pupils' learning.

Recent changes to the school's curriculum have been for the better. Leaders are focused on ambition in every subject. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learning the same content as their peers. Within subjects, leaders have outlined the core knowledge and skills that pupils learn in each year group. This work is nearing completion and leaders know which subjects need further tweaks. In early years, leaders are double checking that the steps of knowledge are clearly identified so all teachers know what children should learn in their first year at school.

The school's improvement plan has rightly prioritised pupils' reading. Recent phonics outcomes were disappointing, and governors have invested in more resources to strengthen the school's existing phonics programme. Staff are now expertly trained and teach the planned lessons with more confidence and skill. Children in Reception

Year start right away with learning to read. Pupils read books aligned with the programme's sequence and, therefore, are at the right stage for them. Catch-up phonics sessions are implemented effectively because teachers pick up exactly any gaps pupils have and re-teach these. A love of reading is bubbling wonderfully through the school's new 100 'must read' books from renowned authors.

Leaders are training teachers to deliver the new curriculum with greater skill. Teachers present information in sensible steps for the young pupils. They ask precise questions to check what pupils, including those with SEND, are remembering from previous lessons. However, when setting work in some subjects, pupils can sometimes complete tasks that do not reflect the curriculum's ambition.

When children start school, leaders liaise well with parents and early years providers to understand each child's starting points. The SEND team works efficiently to pick up any additional needs that a child might have. Where a need is formally identified, classroom provision caters for pupils very well.

Pupils behave positively in lessons and work hard. This is a result of the consistent routines that adults implement. The executive headteacher ensures that pupils practise these routines regularly, so that everyone knows what to do.

Governors work efficiently and are a knowledgeable team. They think strategically and set specific goals for improvement. Governors have benefited from external training to support them in holding leaders better to account for pupils' education. Their questions in meetings are digging deeper into the effectiveness of leaders' actions on ensuring pupils' academic achievement.

A well-rounded education is evident in how leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils are kept physically active and know how to look after their bodies. They develop resilience through competitive sport. Pupils learn the ukulele to kickstart a love for music. They experience democracy by applying to be on the pupil eco committee. Charity work develops pupils' compassion for others who are less fortunate than themselves.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have rigorously trained all staff to ensure everyone contributes to a vigilant culture. The executive headteacher wisely sought a local authority audit of safeguarding. This clarified strengths and what to further tighten up. Policies and procedures are robust, with staff alert to any signs that might indicate a child needs help.

Staff know how to raise a concern to the designated safeguarding leads. Record-keeping is detailed in how leaders log information over time. Leaders fully understand how to make a referral to the local authority children's services. The curriculum also teaches pupils to be safe with well-chosen content.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is not consistently strong across some subjects. For example, teachers can sometimes set work that hinders pupils developing detailed knowledge. Leaders need to continue with their strong professional development programme to support teachers' understanding of how to deliver the curriculum intent effectively.
- Subject leaders' skills in checking how securely pupils have learned the planned curriculum are at an early stage. Senior leaders should strengthen subject leaders' expertise in evaluating the quality of education so that all leaders play their part in ensuring pupils reach the highest academic standards possible.

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	125149
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10256334
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lizzie Geffen
Headteacher	Valerie Elliott
Website	www.stmarys-shackleford.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher joined the school in April 2022 and an assistant headteacher role was added to the school's leadership structure. The school is part of an informal local collaboration with the executive headteacher's other primary school. A new chair of governors was elected in September 2022.
- In 2019, the school had a no formal designation inspection due to concerns about pupils' outcomes in writing. The lead inspector found that leaders and governors had taken effective action to maintain the high standards of pupils' outcomes identified at the previous full inspection. Therefore, the overall effectiveness remained outstanding.
- The school does currently 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 met with the executive headteacher, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair. He held telephone calls with a school improvement adviser from the local authority and the deputy director of education for the Diocese of Guildford.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and history. To do this, they met with subject teachers, looked at curriculum plans, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine record-keeping and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. The team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation and school improvement priorities, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, pupil premium strategy, school improvement visit reports from the local authority and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Eggleton

Ofsted Inspector

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