

Inspection of St Mark's Catholic Primary School, Ipswich

Stone Lodge Lane West, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9HN

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 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 15 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 learn in a supportive, caring school. They respect the way that everyone is different. They talk proudly about the range of pupils in their school. They know this helps them learn about the world. Sometimes, it helps them learn new skills, such as sign language.

Pupils feel safe. Adults in school care about them. Pupils understand what bullying is. They know it is different to falling out with friends. They feel confident they can talk to adults in school if it happens. They can also use the school worry box to share their concerns, and adults will help.

Pupils generally behave well. They listen to teachers and are keen to be involved and answer questions. They play together happily with their friends at breaktimes. They enjoy each other's company. In a few lessons, adults do not encourage pupils to listen carefully enough or concentrate on their work. On occasion, this behaviour interrupts learning.

Pupils enjoy the sporting clubs that they can attend. The school councillors and head pupils have agreed that pupils would like a wider variety of clubs. They are planning to introduce these very soon.

Pupils are prepared for the next stage of their learning. Leaders have high expectations of them.

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

The school is going through a period of change. New leaders have focused on the curriculum and pupils' learning. They have developed an aspirational curriculum that demonstrates high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Most curriculum thinking details what pupils need to learn and when. Leaders include key knowledge that pupils must remember. Some leaders help with supportive resources. These resources help teachers to teach effectively. In some subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking is less clear and gives less support and guidance to teachers. Leaders are reviewing each subject carefully over time.

Teachers have the subject knowledge needed to teach confidently and well in most subjects. Many of the curriculum programmes are new. However, teachers have become confident in teaching them quickly. Subject specialists teach some areas of the curriculum, including physical education (PE) and French. Their expertise is valued by staff. Teachers check regularly that pupils remember what they have learned. Teachers use familiar resources and routines when teaching. This supports pupils' confidence in learning.

The early reading curriculum is planned and taught well. Leaders and teachers in the early years prioritise the learning of early language and reading. Adults in the early years model good language and expect children to do the same. If pupils fall behind

in their reading, they are supported to keep up, with extra teaching. Pupils across the school read often. Adults read to pupils regularly, and discuss books. Pupils learn new words as a result, and develop their understanding of stories. However, the books that pupils learn to read from are not always well matched to the sounds that they know. This impacts on a small but significant number of pupils: those who need more time and help learning to read. This hinders the progress of these pupils towards becoming confident, fluent and accurate readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Leaders have equally high expectations of pupils with SEND as they have of other pupils. Leaders identify pupils' needs, and review the impact of their support, regularly. Staff understand the needs of pupils with SEND well. As a result, pupils with SEND confidently join the same lessons as their friends. They make good progress in their learning.

Leaders have recently reviewed the behaviour policy. Behaviour has improved. Pupils understand the rules, and know what should happen if they do not follow them. Mostly, pupils behave well, listen to their teachers and engage in their learning. However, not all staff consistently implement the behaviour policy. On a few occasions, learning is interrupted by pupils calling out or talking over each other or the teacher. This hampers pupils' progress through the curriculum

Pupils benefit from a number of opportunities to develop personally as well as academically. They are proud of the posts of responsibilities they hold as school councillors and road safety leads. They understand that family structures are varied, and respect this.

Leaders and governors have worked together effectively to improve the school after a period of instability. They have focused their attentions on the curriculum, pupils' well-being and improving the quality of education. Governors receive appropriate information to help them make decisions about the school's next steps. Leaders and governors support staff well with their workload. Staff appreciate this, and the time they have to carry out their leadership roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise the safety and well-being of pupils. All staff are trained to spot concerns about pupils. They update their training regularly. Staff report any worries they have about pupils quickly. Leaders are determined and persistent in following up safeguarding matters. They have developed their own resources to support families. They also work with other agencies to keep pupils safe when needed. Leaders ensure that they carry out appropriate checks on staff prior to them being employed at the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when they are working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn in some subjects. Teachers do not know which important knowledge to teach and when. They do not always plan a series of lessons that build effectively on what pupils already know and can do in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that, in all subjects, they identify precisely the important knowledge they want pupils to learn. This should be ordered in a way that enables teachers to plan sequences of learning that help pupils remember and build on previous learning, so that they achieve equally well in all subjects.
- Books that are chosen for some pupils in the early stages of reading are not well matched to pupils' phonic knowledge. This means these pupils cannot practise using the sounds they know. This impacts negatively on their ability to read fluently, accurately and with understanding as quickly as they could. Leaders must ensure that all pupils who are learning to read must be provided with books that match their phonic knowledge so that they can read with fluency, understanding and confidence.
- Some staff do not consistently follow the school's behaviour policy. They do not always address pupils' interruptions to learning. Leaders must ensure that all staff follow the behaviour policy consistently so that pupils' learning is not interrupted.

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	124786
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10242257
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marion Filmer
Headteacher	Beverley Derrett
Website	www.stmarkscatholicprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 February 2008

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.
- The school is currently led by an interim headteacher.
- The school's last inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in 2015. The next section 48 inspection is due in 2023.

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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the design of the curriculum, spoke

with subject leaders, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. They also spoke with teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors spoke with leaders of other curriculum subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders responsible for attendance, and the special educational needs coordinator, governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Catholic Diocese of East Anglia.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed records, policies and documents related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed the 45 responses and 40 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spoke with pupils, including at breaktimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed the 14 responses from staff submitted to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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