

# Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Infant School

Bouncers Lane, Prestbury, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 5JB

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Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

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

This school was last inspected 14 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 thrive at this friendly and welcoming school. Leaders and staff aim high. They strive for pupils to be resilient, to communicate and show teamwork. They call this 'The Prestbury Learner'. It is at the core of the school's work and helps pupils to succeed.

Leaders have established a caring ethos based on the school's Christian values. Staff and pupils look out for each other and show high levels of respect. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They hold doors open for visitors and greet staff with a smile.

Pupils need few reminders about their behaviour. They deliberately set out to do the right thing and follow the school rules. Unkind words and actions are extremely rare. Pupils say, 'We help each other and make everyone feel welcome', and they do.

Pupils proudly take on leadership responsibilities. They vote for the school councillors to build their understanding of democracy. In assembly, pupils enjoy earning a 'pebble' for demonstrating a value, such as love or forgiveness.

The great majority of parents praise the school. Many believe that the staff 'go above and beyond to ensure that the children are at the heart' of all they do.

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

The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher lead with integrity. They have formed a dedicated, united team where everyone feels listened to and valued. Staff morale is high.

Leaders make reading a top priority. Staff use every opportunity to celebrate the joys of books and reading. In the Reception Year, staff use songs and rhymes to prepare children for reading. The new and more ambitious approach to phonics works well. Staff know how to teach phonics. They step in quickly if a pupil needs extra help. Staff ensure that pupils read books suited to their needs. This improves their confidence. By the time pupils leave Year 2, they read fluently.

Teachers broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them by sharing high-quality books that cover a range of themes. For example, pupils in Year 1 know about different faiths and cultures from reading a book about a young Muslim girl. Pupils say, 'It is okay to be different; it would be boring if we were all the same.'

Leaders have designed a carefully crafted curriculum. In many subjects, they have set out the small steps that pupils need to learn and by when. Teachers build on pupils' knowledge during lessons and over time. For example, pupils in Year 1 draw on what they know about doubles in mathematics to apply to new learning. In Year 2, pupils understand chronology and can explain important dates and events they learned in Year 1.

In a few subjects, leaders are still working on identifying the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn and by when. This means that pupils do not gain the same depth of understanding as they do in most other subjects.

Teachers assess pupils' understanding well during lessons. They use quizzes and questions to help pupils remember previous learning. However, leaders recognise that some subject leaders have not checked what pupils know and can do. They have plans to improve this subject by subject.

Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) early and accurately. They work in tandem with parents when planning support. Staff provide additional resources so that these pupils learn confidently alongside their peers. As a result, most pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm and orderly. From the Reception Year, children quickly learn routines and become increasingly independent. This strong start continues into Year 1 and beyond.

Leaders carefully plan pupils' personal development. For example, pupils visit places of worship to broaden their cultural awareness. They learn how to stand up for what they believe in. Staff act as role models. They take the time to celebrate individuality and differences. Pupils say they know why it is important to 'always be kind'. These and other qualities help them develop into responsible young citizens.

A highlight for many pupils are the assemblies led by church volunteers. In these sessions, pupils enjoy acting out Bible stories and having dedicated time to pray and reflect. This contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual development.

Governors share leaders' determination for all children to leave St Mary's confident, happy and ready for the demands of Year 3. They know the school and community well. They visit regularly to seek the views of staff and pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders train all staff to keep pupils safe. Everyone working in school understands how to identify and report concerns. Leaders act fast in making decisions. A dedicated safeguarding governor checks on the school's systems to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that adults who work at the school are safe to do so.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about important issues such as water safety and online learning. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not identify the precise knowledge they want pupils to know and remember, including in the early years. In these subjects, pupils do not gain the depth of understanding they could. Leaders must identify the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn in all subjects.
- Some subject leaders do not check the quality of education closely enough. As a result, they do not clearly understand whether pupils and children in the early years have acquired the knowledge needed for future learning. Subject leaders should check the quality of education in their subject to ensure that pupils learn what is intended in the curriculum.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115711
<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256659
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	179
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Neil Penny
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Fletcher
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.prestburystmarysfederation.co.uk">www.prestburystmarysfederation.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 July 2009

## Information about this school

- The school is federated with St Mary's Church of England Junior School. The schools are known as the Prestbury St Mary's Federation.
- The federation shares an executive headteacher, a deputy headteacher and a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The governing body is shared between the two schools.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is in the Diocese of Gloucester. At the most recent section 48 inspection of the school, carried out in November 2019, the school was judged to be excellent.

## 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, the deputy headteacher, school staff and three governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- The lead inspector met with curriculum leaders and looked at documentation in personal, social and health education and early writing.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to an adult.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. Inspectors talked to governors, staff and pupils about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to discuss how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Dale Burr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sean McKeown

Ofsted Inspector

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