

# Inspection of St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary School

Newton Lane, Cockerton, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9EX

---

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 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 Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy the warm and welcoming atmosphere at St Marys Cockerton Primary School. Leaders want pupils to develop compassion and knowledge through their 'global explorer' curriculum. Staff help pupils to gather this knowledge in their imaginary 'backpack' and are ambitious for what pupils can achieve.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of curriculum subjects in the school. They learn how to make poses in dance or speak in whole sentences in French. They remember a lot of what they have been taught. Pupils remember less of what they are taught when it is does not link as well with what they have learned in the past.

Pupils are polite and respectful to each other. They listen to their teachers attentively. Pupils play well together at lunchtime and line up quickly when it is time to come inside. Staff take all issues that pupils bring to them seriously and stamp out any unkind behaviour before it develops into bullying. Pupils enjoy ringing the 'above and beyond' bell that lets the school know that they have done something exceptional. However, staff sometimes do not give some pupils the help that they need to stay focused on what they are doing.

Pupils are taught to 'think global, act local'. Staff encourage pupils to pick up litter in the community to help the global environment. Pupils enjoy collecting points for their house and counting their tokens on a Friday. Pupils look forward to breaktimes, where they get to build dens outside and play with pupils from other classes.

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

Trustees provide a significant amount of challenge and support to leaders in the school. Trust leaders and school leaders have prioritised the right areas and have made significant improvements to the curriculum. Trustees check on the progress of these improvements regularly and that it is having the desired impact on what pupils can remember and do.

Leaders have mapped out a curriculum that covers what pupils need to be able to know and do in each class. Leaders have ensured that this starts with what children in Reception need to be able to achieve before moving on to Year 1. Leaders have strengthened the curriculum in English and mathematics. However, Year 6 outcomes from 2022 do not reflect some of these improvements. These pupils had not had sufficient time to fully benefit from the improved curriculum offer as much as current pupils.

In most subjects, leaders have broken the knowledge down into smaller steps for pupils to build on what they know about concepts such as how to use grammar in French or adding numbers together. In some foundation subjects, like history, leaders have not ensured that teachers are clear on when to teach certain pieces of knowledge. Sometimes, teachers leave too much time between teaching concepts

and pupils cannot build on what they already know. Pupils sometimes forget important details.

Leaders have a clear vision for teaching reading in the school. Staff understand this vision and make sure that it is happening in practice. Staff in the early years read books to children so that they can learn vocabulary and narratives. Staff also build up children's phonics knowledge and help them practise this by reading fully decodable books. Pupils continue to improve their decoding by learning more phonemes and reading more books. Pupils in key stage 2 have reading books that they can read fluently. They also borrow books from the library that they can take home and read with a parent or carer. Pupils enjoy reading and read frequently.

Teachers clearly explain what pupils need to do in each lesson. Pupils listen carefully to these explanations and then they are excited to have a go themselves. Teachers use techniques like 'my turn, your turn' through which they show pupils how to do something. This helps pupils know what success looks like.

Leaders have ensured that teachers understand the importance of pupils revisiting knowledge. Teachers do this in each lesson to check what pupils have remembered. Teachers are skilled in checking what pupils know. If they spot that a pupil has not understood something, then teachers and teaching assistants give them some extra support. For example, staff might help pupils practise a phoneme in phonics or explain each step of how to calculate area in mathematics. Pupils can remember much of what they have been taught when this is done successfully.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum is suitable for all pupils. Teachers make small changes to what they do with some pupils so that they can be successful. However, teachers sometimes do not support some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as well as they could. Sometimes, these pupils with SEND get frustrated and they are not as successful as they could be. Staff then take them away from learning to settle them and so they get less chance to practise what they need to get better at. This is especially the case for some pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn how to be responsible citizens. Pupils know about different religions and that some families have same-sex parents. Pupils know how to eat healthily and the importance of exercise. While pupils can remember much of what they have been taught, they do forget some of the content of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. That is because, like some foundation subjects, the curriculum does not define when some of the knowledge should be taught and in what order.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have trained staff well to be aware of possible signs of neglect or criminal exploitation that pupils might face. Staff know the pupils and families well and notice

when something is not quite right in school or at home. Leaders ensure that any families or pupils who need support get it quickly, such as from the police or children's services.

On top of this, pupils are taught how to keep them safe online. Staff talk to pupils about this and pupils do report concerns to staff and are encouraged to let their parents or carers know.

Although leaders' actions do keep pupils safe in the school, some of the record-keeping in safeguarding is not precise or accurate enough. Some details are not recorded, such as phone calls to agencies or other pupils involved in an incident. This means that these records are not always an accurate account for that pupil.

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

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

- Leaders have not sufficiently defined the knowledge that should be taught or how this links between year groups in some curriculum subjects, including PSHE. As a result, sometimes teachers are not clear on what to focus on in some lessons and they teach activities without the focus on the core knowledge to be remembered. Leaders should map out when knowledge in subjects, such as history or PSHE, are taught and how this links with prior learning from that year and from previous years.
- Teachers are not clear on how to prepare some pupils with SEND, especially those with an EHC plan, for their learning and then adapt their work. Some pupils with EHC plans are not successful in some lessons and can become frustrated and sometimes need to leave the classroom. Leaders should ensure that staff are clear on the specific needs of each pupil with an EHC plan and have the training and expertise needed to support them in all lessons, especially PE and other foundation subjects.
- Although children are safe, safeguarding leaders sometimes do not fully record some details about actions taken when staff have concerns about a child. This means that some safeguarding records are not a full chronology of what has been done to support a child. Leaders should ensure that there is a clear policy on what and how concerns are recorded and that this is followed consistently by all staff, including safeguarding leaders.

## **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>	142962
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227291
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Paul Mackings
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Aitken (executive)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://stmaryscockerton.org.uk">stmaryscockerton.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Cockerton Primary School left Dove Academy Trust and joined Melrose Learning Trust in May 2022.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club run by 'Cockerton Out of School Club'. This organisation is also inspected by Ofsted and met all standards at its last inspection in May 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for any pupils.
- St Mary's Cockerton Primary School is part of the Diocese of Durham. The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2022.

## 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, assistant vice-principal and other senior leaders to discuss aspects of their work. The lead inspector also met with some trustees, a member of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of Melrose Learning Trust and a representative from the Diocese of Durham separately.
- In order to evaluate the quality of education, inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PE and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, including in the early years, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Other curriculum subjects were used to gather more evidence about the quality of education. Inspectors visited some lessons in French and art and design and spoke to pupils about their work in history and French.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the PSHE curriculum and spoke to pupils about what they do in these lessons.
- Safeguarding records were checked by inspectors, including the single central register of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors spoke to staff about their safeguarding training.
- Inspectors evaluated the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke to some parents about their views.
- The surveys for staff and pupils were also evaluated and inspectors spoke to groups of staff and pupils. A group of pupils gave the lead inspector a tour of the school.

### **Inspection team**

Matthew Knox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cathy Lee

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023