

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's CofE Primary School

Fowler Road, Islington, London N1 2EP

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

St Mary's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of the St Mary's family. They are friendly, confident and polite. Leaders encourage the school's values to underpin how pupils behave towards each other and to staff.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are happy and safe. Pupils understand that bullying is never tolerated here. If it does happen, they are confident that staff will listen to their concerns. Any incidents are dealt with swiftly by staff so that they do not continue.

Pupils benefit from leaders' increasingly high expectations of what they can achieve. Parents and carers appreciated the care and support that their children receive. Generally, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

At breaktimes, pupils play well together. Older pupils relish opportunities to be of service to others. They take on roles such as reading buddies and school councillors. Pupils enjoy visits from members of the community, such as the recent visiting poet who led workshops and an assembly. Trips to local churches, theatres and the War Memorial help to broaden pupils' knowledge of the local area.

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

Leaders' curricular thinking has recently been revised so that it is ambitious. Children in the early years have a well-structured curriculum. They build on their knowledge and understanding of the world around them and become confident, happy learners. Leaders have sequenced content that pupils learn in a logical way. This helps pupils to develop a secure body of knowledge in most subjects. For example, in computing, pupils become skilful in coding and designing animations. However, in some subjects, leaders' curricular thinking is not as well developed. This is because subject leaders who are new to their roles do not have sufficient oversight of curriculum development.

Teachers explain new ideas clearly to help deepen pupils' knowledge. For instance, in science, teachers supported pupils in Year 6 to design experiments to measure the refraction and transparency of light. In early years, teachers consider carefully how to develop children's understanding, including when comparing numbers and shapes. This means most children are ready for Year 1. Sometimes, teaching does not check pupils' understanding as routinely well. On these occasions, pupils' misconceptions are not addressed in a timely way.

Leaders ensure that reading has a high priority in the school. Staff build pupils' phonics understanding skilfully. They make sure that pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they know. Teachers spot any pupils who may be falling behind quickly and accurately. Staff help these pupils to catch up through bespoke support. Once pupils are confident in phonics, they move on quickly to read and understand more complex texts. Teachers read to pupils every day. They encourage pupils to read widely from a wide range of high-quality texts.

Leaders and staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. They adapt learning skilfully when appropriate, so that these pupils can succeed. Leaders consider carefully how to ensure pupils with SEND can fully take part in wider opportunities, including visits. Staff support pupils with SEND to be well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils behave well in class and at breaktimes. They enjoy lessons and want to do their best. This means that learning time is not lost to any disruption. Pupils have fun as they make use of the outdoor equipment. They love dancing to the new music centre available to them.

Teachers help pupils to understand the importance of ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities and that everyone is treated with respect. Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn about different cultures and beliefs. This prepares them well for modern British society. Pupils enjoy a wide range of visits. They spoke with great fondness of their visits to the local puppet theatre. Pupils are proud of the girls' football team who recently played in a tournament at the Emirates Stadium.

The governing body knows the school well and is ambitious for its future. Governors use their knowledge to support and challenge leaders to develop further the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders ensure that the workload and well-being of staff are carefully considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. This helps them know when a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders respond promptly to any safeguarding concerns. They work effectively with external

agencies to put support in place for vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders are thorough in their record-keeping.

Pupils are taught about how to keep safe, including online. For example, they learn the importance of keeping passwords and personal information protected.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teaching does not check pupils' understanding effectively. As a result, some pupils do not develop an accurate and secure body of knowledge that prepares them well for future learning. Leaders need to focus their training on helping teachers so that their use of formative assessment is used consistently well.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles and have not received appropriate training to develop their subject areas. This means that they are not fully effective in monitoring and bringing about necessary improvements to the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders receive the right support and training to enable them to oversee their roles effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

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

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| Unique reference number | 100446 |
| Local authority | Islington |
| Inspection number | 10255471 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 158 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Eric Sorensen |
| Headteacher | Genevieve Prayag Anthony David (interim headteacher) |
| Website | www.stmarys.islington.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The interim headteacher started in this school in January 2023. He is currently executive headteacher of two other primary schools. The substantive headteacher was not present during the course of this inspection.
- The most recent section 48 inspection, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in March 2016.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the interim headteacher and other leaders. The inspector held discussions with members of the governing body, including the chair. He spoke with a

representative of the local authority and also spoke with a representative from the London Diocesan Board.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, considered the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the curriculum in other subjects, including mathematics.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation related to safeguarding. This included the record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, including through responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Sean Flood, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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