

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

Chanters Road, Bideford, Devon EX39 2QN

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

St Mary's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Mary's Church of England Primary School are happy to come to school. They appreciate the high levels of nurture and care that they receive from staff. Pupils share that staff make them feel 'so safe'. They value the links that they have with the church and know that it is important to treat people with kindness and respect. Pupils demonstrate this in their behaviour, both in lessons and at social times. They say that bullying can happen but trust adults to deal with any incidents quickly.

Pupils love to learn. They show enthusiasm in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. One pupil, who reflected the views of many, said, 'I would proudly go into assembly and talk about my learning.' This is because staff support all pupils to become confident learners.

Some pupils have responsibilities within the school, such as head girl and boy, school council and 'EcoKids'. They take these roles seriously. For example, members of the school council plan events to raise money for charities, including sponsoring children in other countries. Pupils, along with parents and carers, share that they would like a wider range of extra-curricular clubs and opportunities, which have been hampered by COVID-19.

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

Leaders provide staff with the knowledge and expertise that they need to support school improvement. Subject leaders ably use what they know to support staff within their subject. As a result, pupils learn an ambitious curriculum where important knowledge is clearly identified. Pupils know and remember much of what they learn. For example, in English, younger pupils talk about different genres of writing with confidence. However, in some subjects, leaders do not identify and sequence the vocabulary that they want pupils to know and use with the same precision.

Despite writing outcomes being lower than the national average, leaders have taken effective action to improve this. The teaching of writing is consistent throughout the

school. Children in the Reception Year use early mark making to write their names at the self-service snack station. Older pupils talk with confidence about how they use rhetorical questions in their suspense writing.

Pupils love to read. They learn to read as soon as they start school. Children in the Reception Year enjoy listening to stories read by adults. Throughout the school, staff read to pupils regularly. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their favourite books and poems. Leaders select high-quality texts for pupils to know well across the curriculum. For example, older pupils talk about the context of a class reader, using the locational knowledge they learned in geography.

Staff check what pupils know and can do regularly, including in reading. They use what they know to adapt future learning effectively. Some pupils get additional help to support them with any gaps in their knowledge. For example, pupils say that 'flashback learning' helps them to remember more. As a result, pupils become confident learners and readers.

Pupils with SEND learn an ambitious curriculum. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) guides staff to use carefully selected resources and support, which helps pupils to succeed.

Pupils follow a well-considered curriculum to support their personal development. Leaders place their school values at the centre of this curriculum. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps and talk about the importance of being mentally and physically healthy. Pupils learn about significant people from different times and places. Leaders select these people carefully to ensure that pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of protected characteristics, such as race, gender and disability. Pupils spoke confidently about how some of these people stood up for the rights of others. Other pupils demonstrated their understanding of important climate and ecological issues from their learning.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive from school leaders. They feel that leaders consider workload carefully. Alongside this, they say that they receive any help that they need to support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place safeguarding at the heart of what they do. Staff receive regular safeguarding training, including a question of the week to keep them up to date with local and national safeguarding contexts. Therefore, staff report concerns effectively. Leaders are quick to act on any concerns, and they work effectively with local agencies. They make the right checks when new staff start at the school. Governors check the impact of leaders' work to keep pupils safe.

Pupils understand how to keep safe when using online technologies and apps. They talk to staff about their worries and know that the leaders with 'pink lanyards' will get them any help that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not identify and sequence pupils' learning of key vocabulary sufficiently well. This means that pupils do not confidently use subject-specific vocabulary in relation to what they learn. Leaders should ensure that the key vocabulary they want pupils to learn is clearly identified and builds in difficulty over time.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2016.

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	113385
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10226868
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sian Jenkins
Headteacher	Naomi Tottle
Website	www.stmarysce.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's Church of England School is a voluntary-controlled primary school. The last section 48 inspection took place on 18 March 2022.
- The school has a breakfast club provision.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the SENCo. The inspector met with representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English and religious education. For each deep dive, she 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 inspector spoke with safeguarding leaders to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. She considered the school's recruitment procedures, training, records of concern and engagement with external agencies. The inspector spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Donna Briggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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