

Inspection of a good school: St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School

Weston Crescent, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 0HA

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St Mary of the Angels Primary thrive both academically and socially. A comment made by one parent echoed the views of others: 'The staff go above and beyond to create a family atmosphere and high expectations.' Pupils live up to these expectations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make excellent progress.

There is a strong sense of pastoral care across the school, which reflects the school's Catholic values. Leaders teach pupils that everyone is different. Pupils respect other people's differences and support one other. For example, peer mentors look after younger pupils in the school. Pupils send Christmas presents to children less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils follow the school's rules and leaders support pupils who may need help to manage their own behaviour. Pupils also take responsibility for this. For example, boys in Year 5 wrote their own charter for good behaviour for playing football at lunchtime. Bullying does not worry the pupils. They know that leaders will respond to any incidents of bullying and deal with them quickly and effectively. The school is a calm and orderly place in which to learn. Pupils feel safe and love coming to school.

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

Leaders think carefully about what pupils will learn. All pupils, including those with SEND, study a wide range of subjects. Leaders make sure that lessons are well planned and sequenced. Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. The things pupils learn build on what they have learned before. Pupils regularly recap on previous learning. This helps learning to stick in their memories.

Leaders have created an environment in which pupils enjoy learning. Pupils particularly enjoy their 'wider learning project' lessons, which combine linked learning from different subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils were mesmerised by the teacher's practical demonstration of an erupting volcano. This brought learning to life.

Leaders use a variety of ways to check pupils' learning. This may entail asking pupils questions or using quizzes to check their understanding. This information is then used well by teachers to inform the next lesson. During this inspection, for example, pupils in mathematics revisited learning from the day before because they were not secure in their knowledge. They went on to apply their knowledge successfully to solve a range of problems.

Reading is a priority. Children in early years quickly develop a love of reading. There is a highly effective reading programme in place and staff receive regular training in how to deliver this. Leaders check how well pupils are reading. They put appropriate support in place for those who need it. Consequently, pupils are developing into confident, fluent readers. The value placed on reading is evident around the school. All classrooms have an inviting reading area, and the well-stocked library is popular with pupils. Teachers base aspects of children's learning around different stories each week. Staff invite parents and carers into school to share their child's reading.

Children get off to a good start in early years. Adults use resources effectively to support children's early literacy and numeracy. Children in Reception have a good understanding of key mathematical concepts, such as 'share' and 'equals'. Effective routines for teaching positive behaviour start in Nursery. Children learn to work together and help one another to carry the toyboxes when they tidy the classroom. These expectations for behaviour continue throughout all year groups. This leads to exceptionally positive behaviour at all times.

Leaders check if pupils need additional support with their learning or wider development. They make sure that pupils get the help they need, including from external agencies. As a result, pupils with SEND make strong progress towards their targets.

Another strength of the school is how it promotes pupils' personal development. Leaders teach pupils how to become active, responsible citizens. They raise money for charities and make donations to the local foodbank. Pupils willingly take on a range of responsibilities. This may be as a sports captain, a member of the school council or chaplain team or as an eco-warrior. There is a wide range of clubs for pupils to enjoy. These include sports, gardening, computing, choir and dance. Pupils and parents appreciate how many 'extras' pupils get at the school.

Governors and leaders are committed to the school. The current headteacher has brought a renewed energy and rigour to further improvement. Leaders know how to make the school even better. Leaders consider staff workload and well-being. For example, staff say that meeting time is used well. All staff say that they enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take pupils' welfare seriously. They report concerns and are confident in the knowledge that leaders will take effective action. Leaders make sure that staff receive regular training. Effective links with external agencies mean that pupils and their families get the right help when they need it. The school completes all the appropriate checks on all adults who work at or visit the school.

Lessons and visiting speakers support the school's work to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know, for example, not to share their personal information online. This helps pupils to feel safe. Parents agree.

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 December 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

Unique reference number	104240
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10240647
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gerard Wintrip
Headteacher	Natalie Hill
Website	www.st-maryangel.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2022.
- A section 48 inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School as a Catholic school took place in February 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club operating on the site. This provision is managed by the school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school has provision for three-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders, staff, pupils and members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone to a representative of the diocese. She also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 also looked at the 'wider learning' curriculum. She talked to leaders, visited lessons, looked at work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning.
- The inspector listened to pupils read.
- The inspector talked to pupils and staff at unstructured times during the day.
- The inspector talked to parents at the school gate.
- The inspector evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The inspector reviewed the single central record of checks on adults in school and met with the school's safeguarding leaders to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil survey. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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