

Inspection of a good school: St Mary and St Michael Primary School

Sutton Street, Stepney, London, E1 0BD

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

St Mary and St Michael Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this harmonious school. They like its strong sense of community, and feel safe and well supported. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a friendly and fun learning environment, and pupils appreciate this. For example, they enjoy the range of activities and equipment on offer in the playground. Leaders seek out ways to provide joyful learning moments, such as when children get to watch the hatching of duck eggs in the Nursery class.

Leaders give careful thought to teaching about character. For example, pupils are taught to be reflective, to consider others and show kindness and tolerance. In lessons and around the school, pupils are polite and articulate. Very little time is lost to low-level disruption. Bullying is rare, but is dealt with effectively when it does occur. Parents and carers, as well as staff and pupils, are very positive about the school.

Leaders ensure that all have access to a broad curriculum. They are ambitious for every pupil's learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils appreciate that teachers are always ready to help them with their learning. They enjoy their lessons and achieve well. Leaders and teachers find lots of ways to promote pupils' broader understanding of the world, including through planning a range of educational trips and events.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all. Their curriculum thinking reflects this, with clear and well-sequenced aims for what pupils need to learn and by when. Pupils enjoy taking part in the many wider experiences that link well to the taught curriculum. For example, in art and design, Year 5 pupils took part in an architecture project with a local company. Activities such as these are also planned to make pupils aware of a range of careers.

Leaders assess how well pupils have learned over time. The needs of individual pupils are well understood. Pupils with SEND receive effective small-group and one-to-one support. Typically, teachers adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively to meet pupils' needs.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the wide range of subjects that they teach. They are clear about the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn, and in the main ensure that teaching enables pupils to understand and remember subject content. For example, in physical education, teaching breaks knowledge into manageable and well-sequenced chunks. Subject-specific vocabulary is introduced and then revisited often. Pupils practise their knowledge and apply what they know, for example through playing sports competitively or by evaluating their peers' performance.

In some instances, teaching is not as successful in breaking down knowledge in a way that enables pupils to learn subject content. Sometimes, when pupils are finding things hard or have misconceptions, this is not addressed. This means that pupils are not able to move on confidently in their learning.

Leaders prioritise reading. They ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the school's chosen phonics programme. Pupils practise their reading using books at the right stage for them. Leaders ensure that all pupils read frequently, either to adults or each other. Staff check how well pupils are progressing in reading and provide support for pupils when this is needed. Leaders promote a love of reading, for example by ensuring that all pupils are read to for at least 10 minutes a day. Pupils are enthusiastic about using the library to choose books. They enjoy reading and see its value.

Leaders think carefully about how to ensure pupils are ready for the next stages of their learning, including moving to secondary school. However, leaders' aims for securing children's readiness for Year 1 are less well embedded. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are taught a broad curriculum. At times, the delivery of this curriculum does not focus enough on helping children to learn the knowledge identified.

Behaviour is consistently positive. Pupils behave well and support one another. Disagreements between pupils are addressed carefully and pupils are given the chance to put things right. They learn to understand the views of others and trust staff to help them resolve difficulties.

The provision for pupils' wider development includes a focus on helping pupils to develop positive character traits. Staff model and teach the school values, especially compassion. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example through leading paired reading or acting as classroom monitors. They relish taking part in a range of wider opportunities, for example through sport and the choir, or the recent talk on finance by a speaker from a large investment bank. Making a positive difference to the community is also encouraged. For example, pupils are working with an environmental charity to plant more trees in the playground.

Staff are very positive about working here. They appreciate the support they receive with training and well-being.

Governors and leaders are knowledgeable about the school and work to provide support for the school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are trained appropriately and are vigilant. Staff are confident about recognising and reporting need. Leaders are thorough in the way they follow this up. They make referrals and seek help from other local agencies when needed. They also ensure that help is available on site, for example through counselling. They keep suitable records so that they can check that the right support is made available and is making a difference. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment practices are followed.

Pupils are kept safe. They are highly positive about the support that they receive and the trust they have in teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers are clear about the long-term aims of the curriculum. However, in some instances, the knowledge that pupils need to learn is not taught in sufficiently small parts. Sometimes, the things that pupils are finding difficult to understand or remember are not identified accurately. This means that some pupils retain misconceptions or cannot link their learning to what comes later in the curriculum. Leaders need to improve their oversight of how the curriculum is delivered, including in the early years. This includes making sure that teaching helps pupils to build up their knowledge in manageable steps, and addresses misconceptions in a timely manner.

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 March 2017.

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	131936
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10240732
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	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mike Killington
Headteacher	Rachel Mahon
Website	www.st-marymichael.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders make use of no alternative provision.
- The school has a Catholic religious character. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2023.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the leadership team to discuss the curriculum and other areas of the school. She also spoke to governors and the local authority school improvement partner.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. 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 considered learning in some other subjects.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke to school leaders and governors and considered the views of pupils, staff and parents. She reviewed records of concerns referred to safeguarding leaders, and spoke to a safeguarding representative of the local authority.
- As well as speaking to parents, staff and pupils, the inspector considered responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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