

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

Westgate Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5DE

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

St Mary's 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's are proud to be part of this nurturing environment. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe here. They are kind and polite towards their peers, meeting leaders' high expectations of their behaviour.

Leaders have high ambition for what pupils learn throughout their time at the school. Pupils experience a broad and well-structured curriculum from Reception onwards. They work hard and produce work of high quality in different subjects.

Pupils enjoy the range of visits and activities available to enrich their learning. For example, children in Reception visit the National Gallery. Pupils can take part in a range of activities, including Taekwondo and coding club. All pupils in Year 3 are supported to learn a musical instrument. There are many opportunities to engage with the ethos of the school, including through weekly whole-school events. Pupils also learn about other religions, including through visits to both a gurdwara and a mosque.

Pupils are encouraged to become leaders and support their younger peers. For example, 'digital leaders' deliver assemblies and lead activities to share important information about online safety. 'Sports captains' organise sports activities for others. Pupils are encouraged to support the well-being of those outside of the school, including, for example, by delivering food to a local food bank.

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

The curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that pupils build up their knowledge cumulatively. All areas of the curriculum meet or exceed what is expected nationally.

Leaders have identified what pupils need to learn. This is sequenced effectively to help pupils to embed their understanding and build a deep body of knowledge. For example, in art, children in Reception practise mark making and modelling, and create collages. Older pupils use what they have learned to build increasingly complex structures using different materials. For example, they used a range of tools, including a wire cutter, to sculpt terra cotta clay. Similarly, in mathematics, children in Reception practise different ways of making numbers up to 10. Later on, pupils build on this understanding, learning the multiples of 10 and how decimals are formed. Over time, they use a range of operations, with increasing fluency, to manipulate larger numbers.

Teachers benefit from a range of subject-specific training, including through collaboration with staff from other schools. As a result, they present information clearly, and they consistently help pupils to make links to previous knowledge. Teachers model how pupils can tackle complex activities. They regularly check pupils' understanding. Subject leaders check that the planned curriculum is well implemented and is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. This rigorous evaluation ensures that leaders understand what is working well and that they accurately identify priorities for any further improvement of the curriculum.

All pupils are encouraged to love reading, both at school and at home. Staff are well trained to deliver the agreed phonics programme. They regularly revisit sounds. Pupils have access to a range of texts that are carefully matched to the sounds that they are learning. As a result, pupils develop their fluency and comprehension. They are well placed to tackle more demanding reading materials. Leaders quickly put effective support in place for those who need help with their reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the same ambitious curriculum goals as their peers. Staff are well trained to meet a range of different needs. Pupils with SEND receive appropriately personalised help, including with transitions between key stages. Leaders carefully monitor and update any support provided. As a result, pupils with SEND learn and remember more in different subjects and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Pupils show a focused attitude to their learning. Low-level disruption is rare, and leaders respond swiftly to any incidents where their high expectations are not met. Pupils play sensibly with each other during breaktimes. They are welcoming to new pupils and visitors alike.

Pupils celebrate the diversity of their peers and treat all with respect. For example, a recent 'This Is Me' project has supported pupils to celebrate the diverse cultures within the school community. Leaders have adapted the curriculum to reflect this diversity, including a broad range of international artists and authors in what pupils study. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is designed to support pupils to learn and embed important ideas. For example, pupils are helped to understand how to be a good friend and how to keep themselves safe online.

Staff are proud to work within the close-knit school community. They know their voices are heard and that their workload is considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have built a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff understand their responsibilities as a result of frequent training. Both staff and pupils regularly share any worries that they may have, no matter how small. Safeguarding records show that leaders take concerns seriously and deal with these swiftly. They communicate regularly with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Leaders consider what pupils need to learn about staying safe. For example, pupils learn about the importance of consent and respecting others.

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 predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Primary School Beckenham, to be good in December 2013.

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	141535
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10255462
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	406
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Hayes
Headteacher	Isobel Vassallo
Website	www.st-marys-catholic.bromley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school converted to become a single academy trust in 2014.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector met with members of the governing body and trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and art. They met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of their work.
- The curriculum in other subjects was considered as part of the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.

- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspector checked procedures for recruiting new members of staff. They also met with leaders to discuss how they put safeguarding policies into practice.
- The inspector gathered the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff through both discussions and responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Hannah Glossop, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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