

# Inspection of St Mary's Infants' School

St Mary's Way, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6HY

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Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils who attend St Mary's Infants' School are well cared for. They are confident, friendly and happy. They understand that their teachers have high expectations for them. They know that adults want them to do well. Pupils know that to meet these expectations they have to work hard and pay attention. Most do.

Pupils are generally tolerant and respectful. They are polite and engaging with each other and adults in conversation. They understand the school values and how important it is to be kind to each other. Pupils know the difference between bullying and falling out with each other. While bullying is extremely rare, if it happens pupils have full confidence that adults will help them sort it out.

Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities to develop new and existing interests. They can take part in clubs after school or at times during the day. For example, pupils can take part in gymnastics, cooking, art, or eco clubs. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enthusiastically take up this offer. Pupils who sing with the school choir have had the opportunity to perform to a large crowd alongside professional musicians and singers.

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

Leaders have made significant improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. They have designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious for all pupils. They have considered what pupils need to know and when, from their start in Reception to Year 2. Except for a small number of pupils with specific needs, who follow a bespoke programme, all pupils, including those with SEND, follow this curriculum.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. Leaders understand that it is critically important that pupils can read confidently and fluently. Children begin to learn about phonics as soon as they start in the early years. Leaders have ensured that all staff understand the principles of the adopted phonics programme. This means that teachers mostly deliver lessons as intended. Pupils read challenging books that are expertly matched to their understanding. Teachers use assessment to spot pupils at risk of falling behind. These pupils are quickly picked up and access targeted keep up programmes. As a result, pupils are becoming confident and fluent readers.

Leaders have taken what pupils need to know by the end of Year 2 and broken it down into small, manageable steps. Leaders have then logically ordered these small pieces of information. This means pupils can use what they already know to support new learning. Subject leaders in key stage 1 have worked with those in the early years. They have successfully mapped the knowledge, skills and vocabulary needed to access key stage 1. This means that children are well prepared for Year 1.

Senior leaders have developed the role of subject leaders. These specialists have refined the curriculum and its implementation. This helps teachers understand the curriculum aims and the individual subjects they teach. They use this knowledge to design activities that help pupils learn. However, sometimes activities are not introduced with the level of precision that leaders expect. This can result in pupils disengaging from learning. Teachers generally use assessment well. At times, however, teachers do not determine if all pupils know enough and are ready to move on.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of the individual needs of pupils with SEND. They provide this information to teachers with strategies to support pupils' learning. Teachers use this to construct teaching approaches that will meet those individual needs. These adaptations include pre-teaching, detailed examples and individual support. The result of this is that pupils with SEND are able to progress through the curriculum in line with their peers.

Pupils talk confidently about what they know and are learning. They produce work that is of high quality. The improvements to the curriculum design and delivery, with leaders' improved monitoring, mean that pupils know more, remember more and can do more with what they know.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Most pupils behave well and are positive about their learning. However, occasionally pupils disengage. Some teachers are slow to address this. Sometimes, teachers need to repeat and remind some pupils about expectations and routines. This takes up valuable learning time for others.

Pupils understand difference. They learn about different faiths and cultures. They can explain how different faiths, such as Judaism, celebrate their beliefs. They see difference as something to celebrate, not as a reason to be unkind.

Staff are proud to work in the school. They value the consideration leaders and governors give to their well-being and workload. They understand and share leaders' vision and expectations. They are committed to secure the best for pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff receive regular training. Staff know how to recognise the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff are highly vigilant. If they have a concern, they are quick to report it.

Leaders work with external agencies to get vulnerable pupils the help they need. Leaders are relentless in their pursuit of support for pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They know how to spot risk, and how to report any worries.

Governors oversee that all necessary checks are carried out before adults take up roles in the school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Routines to manage behaviour are not fully embedded. This means that some pupils' behaviour does not meet the high expectations of leaders. Pupils lose learning time as teachers need to repeat instructions or remind pupils of what is expected. Leaders should ensure expectations and learning routines are clearly defined and understood by all staff and pupils. Leaders should ensure that all staff apply the agreed procedures consistently at all times.
- Teachers sometimes adopt unhelpful pedagogical approaches, and sometimes do not use assessment well enough to secure a clear sense of how well pupils understand concepts and if they are ready to progress. Leaders should ensure that all teachers select appropriate pedagogical approaches and assess how well pupils learn.

## **How can I feedback 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117384
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288461
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	133
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing</b>	Ben Hodson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Verity Edey
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk">www.stmarysinfants.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 24 February 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider which is subject to inspection by Ofsted.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader and special educational needs coordinator. They met with governors and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors looked at examples of pupils' writing, reviewed curriculum documentation for computer science, and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records, as well as the school business manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff and pupils and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed the eight responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 78 responses and 51 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff and reviewed the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Harbrow

Ofsted Inspector

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