

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

Sydenham Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2EW

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

St. Mary's Catholic Junior School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Andrew McDonald. This school is part of St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Linda O'Callaghan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Marcella Touray.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of the 'St Mary's family' at this friendly school. The school has high expectations of all pupils. Pupils are taught to be kind to others and try their best in their studies. Pupils rise to this challenge. They listen carefully to their teachers, tackle new learning diligently and treat others with consideration.

The school organises enriching opportunities for pupils. All pupils enjoy weekly swimming lessons and many attend after-school swimming club. Outings to museums and local places of interest extend pupils' learning, for example about different species of animals, dinosaurs and fossils. Pupils sing together in regular hymn practice and the school's choir performs at key events. Pupils readily take up roles of responsibility, including as school council members who regularly raise funds for a range of charities. Year 6 pupil 'prayer partners' support their buddies in Year 3 to settle when they join the school.

Parents and carers appreciate the school's family feel and efforts to make everyone in its community feel included through regular communication, assemblies and the summer fair.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge pupils should gain over time. For example, in Year 3, pupils study proportion in art before learning how to use shading and tone in Year 4 to achieve realistic effects. Likewise, regular practice with different ways of representing numbers in mathematics in Year 3 supports pupils to use larger numbers in calculations in later years. Recently, where leaders have revised the curriculum to strengthen it in some areas, teaching

resources and activities sometimes do not focus as sharply on helping pupils to learn the important knowledge that leaders have identified. As a result, pupils sometimes concentrate on completing activities rather than understanding the important ideas behind them.

Typically, the school checks how well the curriculum is being learned by pupils over time. In some subjects, such as mathematics, staff test out pupils' knowledge of specific concepts regularly. Where this is the case, teachers quickly address misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, where pupils' recall of what they have already learned and can do is not checked, any misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge are not addressed as swiftly.

The school prioritises reading, for example through daily story times, weekly library visits and special events such as author visits. Those who need it receive support, including daily phonics teaching. As with other areas of the curriculum, leaders have revised their approach to phonics to make sure that pupils receive all the help they need in order to read fluently and confidently.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. The school does not delay in seeking advice and support where it may benefit a pupil. Typically, pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers and the same wider opportunities.

Pupils learn without interruption here. Pupils love to collect house points and to be recognised in celebration assemblies for upholding the values of the school. Pupils attend regularly and the school provides comprehensive support on rare occasions when pupils' attendance needs to improve.

The school encourages pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through taught sessions and assemblies. Pupils are taught about current affairs and British values. They are taught that there are both differences and commonalities to be respected and valued in society.

Leaders engage well with staff and take account of their workload. The governing body understands and carries out its role effectively through close work with the school. The trust supports leaders to share expertise. In some areas, leaders' record-keeping does not allow them to monitor the school's work and identify improvement priorities systematically.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Where recent revisions to some areas of the curriculum are less well established, teaching focuses on activities, rather than the important knowledge that pupils should learn. As a result, pupils' understanding of some key content is less secure than in other subjects and pupils find it difficult to recall that knowledge confidently. The school should ensure that teaching uses the most effective methods to help pupils remember important knowledge.
- In some cases, the school does not check pupils' understanding systematically against the aims of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' misunderstandings or misconceptions are missed and not addressed as swiftly as they might be. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding systematically against the curriculum content they have studied so that any misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge can be identified and addressed effectively.
- The school keeps comprehensive records, but at present these are organised across several systems. As a result, the school does not monitor systematically how effectively the school's work is being undertaken in some areas to identify further priorities for improvement. This also presents a risk that important issues may be overlooked. The school should review and improve systems of recording and using information in order to give a clearer oversight of the school's work.

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 July 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142226
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10293293
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marcella Touray
Headteacher	Andrew McDonald
Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimaryschoolstrust.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of St Mary's Catholic Primary Schools Trust, together with one other school.
- This is a Roman Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Southwark.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was carried out in March 2017. It is due for its next section 48 inspection by the end of 2024.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

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 the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, art and science.

- 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 curriculum information in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, trust leaders and other leaders. Inspectors also met with leaders with responsibility for SEND, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector met with representatives from the board of trustees, the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Rebecca Iles-Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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