

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

Church Road, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex BN41 1LB

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this extremely ambitious school. They feel safe and happy, knowing their trusted adults help them with any worries. They benefit from high expectations across school life. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and attentive learners who achieve well. They delight in being recognised for demonstrating the school's learning skills, such as stamina or bravery, and wear their animal badges with pride.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and respectful. As one pupil said, reflecting the views of many, 'We treat others as we would want to be treated.' Relationships across year groups are exceptionally strong. Year 6 'buddies' are kind and caring when they interact with younger pupils. Over lunchtime, pupils have a wealth of activities to choose from. They enjoy riding bikes and go-carts, reading books and playing games. There is an air of excitement, with happy pupils having fun with their friends of all ages.

Families are overwhelmingly positive in their feedback about the school. They appreciate their many opportunities to be included in school life. These include the weekly reading café, where they share books with their children and enjoy refreshments. The highly popular 'grandparents' morning' values inter-generational relationships, to the benefit of all.

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

In all subjects, the school's curriculum is clearly sequenced from early years to Year 6. It is ambitious and relevant to the pupils of St Mary's through the inclusion of local history studies and community links. This curriculum ambition extends to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are supported well towards equally

high expectations through robust systems and careful nurture. Parents and carers of pupils with SEND value the communications they receive and their involvement in discussions about their children's education. The provision in 'Sunflower Class' provides skilled and focused support for pupils who need it.

Teaching is highly effective through the use of the school's 'six steps to successful learning'. Recaps of prior learning enable pupils to make meaningful links between lessons and subjects. Pupils are supported through a well-established 'I do, we do, you do' process. This helps pupils to know what success looks like, enabling them to achieve highly. For example, in mathematics, teachers demonstrate efficient calculation methods. Pupils are then supported to practise them and then, once ready, they move on to apply these methods in mathematical reasoning and real-life problem-solving.

Teaching staff continually check pupils' understanding in lessons and use this information to tailor their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Using skilful questioning and strong subject knowledge, teachers quickly identify and address any misconceptions. All interactions are treated as moments for learning. Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and are keen to contribute to discussions and respond to questions. They make effective use of the resources they are given and are adept at using them independently. Pupils routinely refer to classroom displays which help them to remember current learning and key vocabulary.

Pupils enjoy reading and become skilled and fluent readers. From the moment they start school in early years, children learn how to read using a phonics-based approach. Staff deliver this phonics programme with expertise and children enjoy learning their new sounds and spotting them in stories. Older pupils who find reading more difficult receive the support they need to keep up. The texts pupils encounter across the curriculum are well considered. For example, each class has a 'Super Seven', which includes books exploring inclusion, diversity and global issues.

Provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Their knowledge about equality and diversity is impressive. They are extremely well prepared to face challenges in life and are willing to appropriately 'call out' any unfairness they encounter. A wide variety of enrichment activities are available every week and pupils enthuse about them. These are planned so that pupils can develop their talents and interests in a range of areas, including time travelling through history, chess and how to care for pets. In the 'money-makers' sessions, pupils design entrepreneurial activities and learn about budget management while raising funds. Pupils take pride in filling out their 'Enrichment Passport'.

The members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the school. They understand their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and routinely check the school's procedures. They support the measures taken to develop staff and look after their well-being. Staff relish their development and training opportunities. There is a shared passion for doing whatever it takes to prepare pupils for the next steps in their education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 April 2014.

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	114570
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10287866
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	AnnMarie Klein
Headteacher	Sarah Clayton
Website	www.stmarys.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has an above-average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; 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 had meetings with senior school leaders and representatives from the governing body and the local authority. She also had a phone call with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector analysed responses to the staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses. She also spoke with parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection.
- The inspector evaluated responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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