

Inspection of a good school: St Mary and St Chad CofE First School

Newport Street, Brewood, Stafford, Staffordshire ST19 9DT

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

St Mary and St Chad CofE First School continues to be a good school.

Sandra Lamond is the headteacher of St Mary and St Chad First School. This school is part of Penk Valley Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The board of trustees is chaired by Mark Roberts, but the school is overseen by a local governing committee, chaired by Ian Wood.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and many parents feel lucky to be part of this 'happy and caring' community, where 'everybody feels included'. This is a school that provides a wide range of learning opportunities for all pupils. This successfully encourages most pupils to show positive attitudes to their learning and demonstrate good behaviour, both in and out of the classroom.

Pupils achieve well, with success measured not only by how well they do in their learning, but also in what they achieve outside of lessons. Pupils benefit from many wider opportunities that are matched to their interests. Most pupils take part in after-school clubs such as rugby, dance and art. Many report that 'EKO' club is their favourite because they get to learn outdoors.

There is a calm and respectful culture, and pupils understand the importance of being kind and helpful. Staff demonstrate these values, and this helps pupils to understand the importance of positive relationships. Pupils know what bullying is and feel that, should it happen, staff would help them and deal with it quickly.

The school uses 'faith and spirituality' to promote the importance of being good citizens. Pupils say that learning about other cultures and religions helps them to understand the world around them.

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

The school has redesigned its curriculum so that the important knowledge and skills it wants pupils to learn are clearly set out for all subjects. Staff have received subject-specific training to help them deliver the curriculum effectively. Parents share the view that their children both enjoy and do well at this school. The school has worked to develop leaders at all levels. As a result, subject leaders are developing a clear understanding of how well their subjects are being learned.

Reading is prioritised. The school has designed a reading curriculum that teaches pupils to read and develops their love of reading. There is a wide range of books for pupils to enjoy from different styles and time periods. The school makes sure that pupils read widely and often, including at home. Most pupils achieve well in reading. The school has delivered training to support staff to teach phonics. However, more work is required to make sure that phonic lessons are being delivered with the precision needed to support the weakest readers.

Children in the early years are provided with high-quality learning experiences, delivered by well-trained staff. Children show that they are ready for formal learning and demonstrate that they can concentrate for long periods. They also learn how to play with and care for each other. These traits are seen as important to their successful journey through the school.

All pupils are expected to learn the full curriculum, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school, parents and outside agencies work well to identify what might prevent a pupil from being able to learn. High-quality support plans are in place to help these pupils to achieve. Pupils with SEND sometimes require lessons to be adapted to enable them to be successful. However, for a small number of these pupils, 'what and how' they learn does not always match what is on their individual learning plans.

Pupils behave well. Most say that they can learn without disruption. When pupils need additional help to manage their behaviour, it is offered in a clear and supportive way. Most pupils understand the school rules and report that these make their school a 'happy and safe place to be'.

The school offers a wide range of additional clubs and activities that are matched to the interests of pupils. The school sees the development of pupils' physical and mental well-being as of equal importance to their academic success. The school promotes supporting 'those less fortunate', and pupils demonstrate kindness by raising money for local charities and singing at local events.

The school works well with the trust, which provides support to make improvements. There is a shared determination to keep a 'family feel' while making sure that, across the trust, resources are shared to improve the education offered to pupils. The school and trust seek the views of parents when making key decisions about school life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, teachers do not successfully adapt the curriculum to meet the precise needs of pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils struggle to understand what they are learning. The school should support staff to adapt the curriculum so that learning activities match individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- Staff do not consistently ensure that the books pupils read are matched to their ability. This means that a few pupils struggle to apply their phonics knowledge when reading. The school should make sure that all pupils read books that match the sounds they are learning.

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 predecessor school, St Mary and St Chad First school, to be good in May 2016.

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	147279
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10294663
Type of school	First
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Not applicable
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	Not applicable
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Roberts
Headteacher	Sandra Lamond
Website	http://www.stmarystchadfirst.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary and St Chad First school is part of the Penk Valley Academy Trust and joined the trust in August 2019.
- A local governing board has delegated responsibilities for the quality of education and safety of pupils at this school.
- This school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other school staff, trustees, members of the local governing board and staff from the trust. In addition, the inspector talked to the chief executive officer and chair of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and history. 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 listened to some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and responses to the staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Antony Bradshaw, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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