

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England High School (VA)

Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN7 5FB

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Nicholas Simms. This school is part of St Mary's CE Academy, Cheshunt, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nicholas Simms, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Willis.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. Those in attendance at the previous inspection notice and speak positively about improvements happening at their school. Pupils share the school's high ambitions of what they can learn and achieve. They speak confidently about reaching their career aspirations because the school prepares them well for adult life.

Pupils behave well and treat each other with kindness. Many told us that the best thing about the school is the way the diverse school community feels like a nurturing family. Older pupils and students in the sixth form take responsibility for younger pupils, such as ensuring that Year 7 pupils settle into school successfully. On the rare occasions of bullying, staff deal with it effectively so that it stops and does not reoccur.

The school's work to support the well-being of pupils is strong. Pupils are taught how to live healthy lifestyles. The school supports pupils well to maintain positive mental health while dealing with whatever issues they face.

Pupils benefit from the school's commitment to pupils' personal development through the enrichment opportunities at the school. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning from the educational visits to local, national and international sites of interest.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have made improvements to the design and delivery of the curriculum. The school has a well-designed, ambitious curriculum. This is evident in the good quality of pupils' learning demonstrated in lessons and in their books. However, the improvements in the curriculum are not yet reflected in examination results.

Leaders have designed the curriculum to ensure that pupils make smooth transitions and are thoroughly prepared for each key stage. Curriculum plans provide teachers with the information they need to plan effective learning activities in a sensible order. Leaders also have in place research-informed, whole-school approaches to teaching. Teachers use leaders' guidance effectively. They usually identify when pupils do not know or understand key elements of the curriculum and provide timely help so that pupils do not fall behind.

The school has not ensured that teachers consistently know how to support the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, on occasion, teachers do not provide pupils with precise support. Staff are improving the guidance and training that teachers need to plan effective support for these pupils.

The school helps pupils to develop an enjoyment of and fluency in reading. Particularly in key stage 3, pupils read widely and often. The school is effective in helping most pupils that find reading difficult to improve their reading. For pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading, the school's provision is only partially successful. The school has rightly adjusted the support that it provides for these pupils. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes.

Pupils live up to leaders' expectations of their behaviour. Pupils follow the well-established routines in lessons and usually focus on learning. Staff fairly and consistently deal with any unacceptable behaviour.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about the diverse beliefs and lifestyles found in modern society. Pupils value the opportunities at the school to celebrate others' differences. Sixth-form students speak with conviction, and from informed positions, about their views regarding contemporary issues.

The school prepares pupils well to make decisions about their next steps in employment, education and training. Pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from meaningful work experience opportunities. They receive careers guidance that helps them shape their career goals.

Governors carry out their duties well. They hold leaders to account effectively for the school's work.

Leaders and governors have developed strong relationships with parents, carers, pupils and staff. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, expressed appreciation for the quality of the school's provision. Most staff feel that leaders and governors are considerate of staff's well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not provide teachers with the precise guidance and training they need to plan support to meet the exact needs of some pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could. The school needs to ensure that teachers receive, and act upon, precise guidance and training about the specific needs of pupils with SEND.
- The school does not have sufficiently effective support for pupils at the earliest stages of reading. Though the existing support is enabling these pupils to improve their reading to some extent, more needs to be done. The school must complete its work in sharing the necessary expertise about early reading and put effective

measures in place so that these pupils can learn what they need to read more effectively.

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	138360
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288517
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,092
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Willis
Headteacher	Nicholas Simms
Website	www.st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in April 2023.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.
- This is a school with a Christian ethos within the Diocese of St Albans. The school received its most recent Section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAMS) in January 2020 and will be reinspected approximately five years from then.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chair of the trust, trustees, governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the SENCo, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, design technology, geography, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, looked at curriculum documents, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to some pupils about their learning in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors observed behaviour of pupils in lessons and during social time.
- Inspectors looked at relevant documents, considered pupils' work and held discussions with leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered the 89 staff responses, the 41 pupil responses and the 125 parent responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sue Pryor	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Sutton	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Smith	His Majesty's Inspector

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