

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Ascupart Street, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 1LU

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this exceptional school. They receive an excellent education, with a sharp focus on learning and remembering more, growing in character, and future life chances. Relationships are strong and pupils are very happy. They feel incredibly safe in this haven of calm.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are eager to learn. They consider themselves lucky to attend this school. Pupils are incredibly proud of winning a 'star pupil' mug for exceeding the school's already sky-high expectations. Pupils, including children in the early years, learn exceptionally well.

The school is at the heart of the local community. It makes the most of its location in the 'backyard of St Mary's Stadium'. Strong links between the school and Southampton Football Club help pupils to understand about healthy lifestyles well. The school's intergenerational club supports pupils to build relationships with the elderly, finding similarities and learning different perspectives. Pupils are very well prepared for the next steps in their education and their place in modern Britain.

Parents are highly complimentary of the school. One parent, summing up the views of many, wrote: 'I couldn't have chosen a better school for my child to attend.'

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

The school has a highly ambitious, inspirational curriculum. This often exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum. Pupils' learning in each subject is coherent, well sequenced and skillfully linked to other subjects. The curriculum is fully embedded, and staff teach it consistently well. For example, the early years staff are highly skilled at developing children's language and communication skills.

Learning comes alive at St Mary's. Teachers help pupils to remember their learning. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils used virtual reality headsets to learn and understand more about school life in ancient Mesopotamia. The curriculum builds in opportunities for pupils to recap on previous learning. Teachers draw and build on prior learning exceptionally well.

How much pupils know and remember across all subjects is impressive. In the past, pupils' academic achievements have not been good enough. The new curriculum, alongside an exceptional development programme for all staff, has made a huge difference to how well current pupils learn. Nothing is left to chance. Teachers' checks on how well pupils are learning are methodical. Staff spot misconceptions and address them immediately. All staff uphold the school mantra of 'whatever it takes'.

Many pupils arrive with little or no spoken English. The school ensures that every pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receives the support they need. The provision for pupils with SEND is one of the

school's many strengths. Staff identify their needs accurately. They adapt learning well for individual pupils. Staff are deeply committed to ensuring that all pupils consistently benefit from every opportunity that the school has to offer.

Pupils have a desire to read and the skills to do so well. This starts in the early years, where children start to learn sounds, enjoy stories and increase their vocabulary swiftly. Staff teach phonics accurately. The school provides timely support to any pupils who are finding reading tricky. As such, pupils catch up.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is exceptional. Pupils contribute well to school life. For example, the school council is currently planning how best to address litter in the local community. All pupils in the school have a say in this matter. Staff nurture pupils' character superbly well. The school's character superheroes, such as 'Independent Isla', help pupils to learn well and contribute to society. There is a broad range of clubs in which pupils can take part. Pupils adore these clubs. They benefit from annual trips to London to support their learning and widen their horizons.

Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. Pupils show great compassion for each other. Children in the early years learn how to behave well. The school teaches them how to understand different feelings. Staff encourage them to take turns, share and think for themselves. Older pupils are successful role models to younger pupils.

Parents and carers benefit from the excellent work of the school. Regular workshops help them learn English or understand phonics. The 'Great Exhibition' ensures that parents know what their children have learned.

Staff also flourish at St Mary's. Morale is high. The school supports staff's workload well, allowing them to focus on providing the right level of support for pupils. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school. They bring experience and knowledge, offering the right balance of challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	116343
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10287896
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	544
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lisa Benham
Headteacher	Daniel Constable-Phelps
Website	www.stmaryspri.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in governors, leaders and staff since the last inspection. There have been several changes in headteacher. The current headteacher joined the school in February 2022. He also oversees two other local schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Winchester. Its last inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in March 2016.

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 meetings with senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair. She also met with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Winchester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, physical education and history. 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. An inspector heard pupils read to adults from the school.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in other subjects, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils.
- 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.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and school improvement plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day. They spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour in school. Inspectors considered how the school is supporting pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys. They took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Justin Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector
Deirdre Crutchley	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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