

# Inspection of a good school: St Mary's C of E First Academy

Marston Road, Wheaton Aston, Staffordshire ST19 9PQ

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Inspection date:

7 November 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 not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The executive principal of this school is Rod Dickson. This school is part of St Chad's Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Cockshott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Orlik.

## What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's C of E First Academy is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. The school's values of 'belief, respect and friendship' permeate the school. Parents and carers share positive views of the school, typically commenting that leaders are making positive changes that they appreciate.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They treat each other with respect and listen to teachers.

Pupil leadership roles have recently been introduced, such as a 'pupil leadership team' and 'Eco Team'. Pupils are proud of their leadership roles and take them seriously. Leaders ensure that pupils have a variety of extra-curricular activities available in which to participate, including multi-sports, art and music tuition.

Pupils take part in a termly visit or in-school experience. For example, the animal man visited children and pupils went to Wroxeter as part of a history topic. Pupils visit a local church regularly, most recently for a harvest festival service. Pupils have also made poppies and prayers for the local village cenotaph in preparation for Remembrance Sunday.

Leaders have begun to introduce positive changes to teaching. However, these are new and not yet having the impact they need to on pupils' achievement.

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

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. They have set to work on developing the curriculum and staff expertise. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement in some subjects. However, this work is at an early stage and there is still more to do.

The curriculum has been carefully considered. Knowledge and vocabulary have been well sequenced. However, pupils do not achieve as much as they could across the whole curriculum. This is because, in many subjects, teachers do not have the necessary expertise to teach the curriculum well. Consequently, for many subjects, checks on learning are not as well focused as they could be.

The school has clear plans in place to improve the teaching of phonics. A new phonics programme was introduced last year. Most staff have received training in how to teach this. However, the school's phonics programme is taught inconsistently. This affects how well pupils learn to read. Staff have recently carried out phonics assessments. However, support is not in place to help all pupils to catch up quickly. This affects the progress that these pupils make.

The mathematics curriculum has been redeveloped recently. Leaders have considered the important knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and when. Some teachers possess the necessary subject knowledge to teach the mathematics curriculum well. However, a small number of staff lack the necessary expertise to teach mathematics effectively. Leaders are aware of this and have begun to act.

Children in early years are well cared for. Relationships are strong. Staff in the early years ensure that children are settled and nurtured. They understand the need to focus on early language development and have taken steps to address this through the curriculum. Children enjoy listening to stories at the end of each day. They learn to take turns with others and play in the home corner cooperatively. Consequently, children develop vocabulary well.

Leaders work with a range of external agencies to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. This starts from early years. Most pupils with SEND are well supported to access the curriculum. However, some staff lack the expertise to support some of these pupils successfully. Leaders are aware and have started to address this appropriately.

Pupils learn about fundamental British values and different religions and cultures. For example, they take part in visits to a local church and a mosque. They understand and respect the different opinions and beliefs of others.

Governors and trustees understand their responsibilities. They are knowledgeable about the work of the school and are supporting leaders to make improvements, but this is at an early stage. Staff report that they feel well supported with their workload and well-being.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff have the subject-specific knowledge they need to teach all areas of the curriculum. As a result, some subjects are not taught as well as they could be. The school should ensure that staff develop the expertise they need to teach all subjects equally well so that pupils make the progress they need to across the curriculum and standards improve as a result.

## 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's C of E First School, to be good in July 2019.

## 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146427
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294640
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Anthony Orlik
<b>Executive Principal</b>	Rod Dickson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-marys-wheatonaston.staffs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Mary's C of E First Academy is a converter academy within St Chad's Academies Trust.
- The school is federated with a local middle school.
- The school operate a breakfast club.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in June 2023.
- Leaders do not make use of any 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance.

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, head of school, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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 met with staff to discuss their work and the support they receive to carry out their roles.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about how safe they feel in school and how they learn to keep themselves safe.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Emma Titchener, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Snooks	Ofsted Inspector

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