

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Tennyson Avenue, Grangetown, Middlesbrough TS6 7AD

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Anna McClurey. This school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Hugh Hegarty, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joseph Hughes.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Mary's Catholic Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Mary's Roman Catholic School to be outstanding, before it opened as St Mary's Catholic Primary School as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a beacon of aspiration in the community. The school's ethos of love underpins everything it does. Consequently, pupils are taught in a loving and caring atmosphere and show these values of love and consideration for others.

Pupils have consistently positive attitudes towards their learning. They are polite and respectful learners. Pupils participate in lessons with enthusiasm.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. There are clear and high expectations of behaviour in place. Pupils know, understand and abide by the school's behaviour routines.

The school provides an extensive extra-curricular offer for pupils. There is a strong take-up by pupils for clubs, such as those for gardening, reading, computing and football.

Every pupil at St Mary's has a leadership role when they are in key stage 2. They carry out roles as sports leaders, attendance ambassadors and house captains. These leaders listen, support each other and have a voice to effect change in their school.

The school purposefully plans 33 stimulating events linked to the curriculum that pupils experience during their time at St Mary's. For example, in Year 1, pupils learn about the Great Fire of London and in Year 2, they visit York and use their knowledge to explain how fire spreads in narrow streets. These educational visits enable pupils to apply their learned knowledge in a new context. Leaders carefully balance academic rigour with rich life experiences.

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

The school's curriculum is incredibly ambitious. Staff have a shared, deep understanding of how the curriculum builds over time. The curriculum is extremely well sequenced and supports the development of pupils' language and communication skills purposefully. For example, adults consistently encourage pupils to 'say it again and say it better'. This ensures that pupils constantly finesse and add detail to their responses, growing in confidence at the same time.

The school prioritises reading and has a focus on developing pupils' language skills to enable them to acquire phonics knowledge rapidly. Across the school, staff consistently use the same lesson structure, actions and vocabulary to help pupils to build this knowledge. They ensure that pupils learn the sounds in the phonics programme thoroughly. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words. The school has a rigorous programme to help pupils who need extra phonics support. This means that pupils who have fallen behind catch up with their peers rapidly.

The mathematics curriculum builds throughout the school from the very firm foundations laid in early years. Teachers nimbly identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and address their misconceptions effectively. The impact of the school's emphasis on pupils' oral skills is evident in mathematics. Pupils use sentence stems to articulate aloud the reasons behind their mathematical responses. These oral skills help pupils to reason, describe similarities and/or differences, and explain mathematical connections.

The exceptional quality of the school's curriculum is not reflected in the outcomes achieved by pupils in 2023. Some pupils experienced significant disruption to their learning, which impacted on these outcomes.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is excellent. Support is appropriately targeted, especially for pupils who encounter traumatic experiences, such as bereavement. Pupils with SEND access therapeutic or specially resourced provision. These pathways ensure that pupils with SEND experience bespoke curriculums in an inclusive, nurturing environment.

Children in early years learn in an attractive, exciting environment in which everything has a purpose. The school thoughtfully selects resources to meet the children's needs. For example, Nursery children have a grassed area with a slope to accelerate their physical development. They use this slope to gain confidence, coordination and muscle strength. Children sustain concentration in their own play. Adults adeptly intervene and enhance their learning. The staff expertly model language to question and support children sensitively to share their thoughts and ideas.

The school ensures that pupils have an in-depth understanding of how to keep mentally healthy. Specific sessions equip pupils with tangible, positive coping strategies, such as breathing techniques. Pupils know the scientific names for the parts of the brain that affect their mental well-being. The school has trained some Year 5 pupils to help support the well-being of others across the school.

The school has high expectations of pupils' regular attendance. Its analysis confirms the direct link between low attendance and weak achievement. The school analyses attendance information every week. Leaders ensure that pupils who need support to attend regularly receive that support immediately.

Staff access focused professional development opportunities. The school links staff training to credible research. Staff have dedicated time to read, apply and reflect on the impact of their training. This results in continuous curriculum improvement. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support of the trust, the local governing board and the school's leaders.

Members of the local governing board have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They recognise that the strength of all leaders, including the executive headteacher, subject leaders and trust leaders, contributes hugely to the outstanding education on offer.

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	140779
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10211821
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joseph Hughes
CEO of the trust	Hugh Hegarty
Headteacher	Anna McClurey
Website	www.stmarys.npcat.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy in April 2014. When its predecessor school, St Mary's RC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust.
- The headteacher is also the executive headteacher of this school and one other primary school in the trust.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The specialised resourced programme provides some pupils with learning support, tailored to their individual needs in a smaller, nurturing provision.
- In the therapeutic provision, pupils access a sensory space with the support of a school counsellor.
- The school is a Roman Catholic primary school. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2023.
- The school has Nursery provision for two- and three-year-old children.

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 had 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 met with the executive headteacher, curriculum leaders, staff and pupils.
- Meetings were also held with representatives of the local governing board, the CEO, the chair of the trust and a representative for the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics 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.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum structure in science, and art and design.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 views of parents and carers, staff and pupils were considered through meeting with them and from the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector His Majesty's Inspector

Julie McGrane Ofsted Inspector

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