

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Island Way West, St Mary's Island, Chatham, Kent ME4 3ST

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 November 2023

Outcome

St Mary's Island Church of England (Aided) Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has an ambitious vision that 'only the best will do' for pupils. It has developed an effective curriculum from the nursery to Year 6, and most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do well. Teachers use their subject knowledge to make the curriculum interesting and bring it to life. As one parent commented: 'Pupils love learning with their enthusiastic teachers.'

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. From nursery, they are taught the school's high expectations and consistent routines that enable everyone to concentrate and focus. Pupils say they learn to 'treat others as we would want to be treated ourselves'. They are kind and respectful towards each other, holding doors open and taking turns considerately.

Pupils learn the school values of service, trust, respect, compassion, forgiveness, hope and thankfulness, which are placed firmly at the heart of school life. They enjoy their roles of responsibility, such as sports captains, reading buddies and school prefects. During worship time, pupils learn from examples of significant people and organisations where others are helped through putting the school's values into practice.

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

Children have a strong start in the nursery, where adults meet their care and learning needs skilfully. Here, the school's high expectations for behaviour are firmly established early on. Children quickly become confident to explore their own ideas. They independently get out equipment to paint pictures or make up music using percussion instruments. Children develop their language and communication skills through the wide range of carefully chosen books that adults share with them. The school has established what children must learn in Reception to be ready for the Year 1 curriculum. For example, when learning about the significance of birthdays, children in Reception write invitations

to their friends, practising the letter sounds they know. Children find out about and then draw the national flags of the countries their friends have links with. Then, they choose the right size of paintbrush to mix colours and paint their flags. Adults know what children need to consolidate or learn next and skilfully weave this into activities that interest children.

The school has placed great importance on reading, which is taught well. Adults are ambitious for all pupils to learn to read as well as they can. Adults help pupils to access letter sounds through pictures, resources and tailored activities. From entering Reception, children write the letter sounds as they are introduced, learning to read words and spell at the same time. Adults frequently listen to children reading and know what sounds they need to practise. Any pupils at risk of falling behind are given effective support, which enables them to keep up.

The school has set the curriculum out coherently so that pupils build their knowledge in logical order over time. Staff have identified the most important knowledge and skills that pupils must understand and remember in most subjects. For some other subjects, this detail is still developing, and teachers do not always know exactly what must be taught. Adults adapt their teaching and resources to meet the needs of pupils with SEND so they can access the same content as their peers.

In some parts of the curriculum, assessment is used to check precisely what pupils understand and remember before moving on to new areas of learning. However, this does not happen consistently, which means that teaching is not always adapted to close gaps in knowledge, correct misconceptions, or re-cap what pupils most need to recall or practise. As a result, pupils struggle to remember new learning or make connections with what they learned before and so do not achieve as well as they could.

The school offers many opportunities for pupils to develop their characters and interests. They learn about healthy relationships and how to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet. They are taught about different faiths and the importance of respecting people's differing points of view. There are a wide range of clubs and trips offered by the school to build pupils' experiences and character.

Governors are ambitious for the school to adapt its inclusive vision as it becomes more diverse. Governors understand their statutory duties, supporting and holding the school to account effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, the school has not fully identified the knowledge and skills pupils must understand and remember. As a result, adults do not always teach what pupils most need to know. The school should continue to ensure that ongoing refinements to curriculum planning lead to vital knowledge being identified precisely and taught deliberately across all of the subjects that pupils will learn.
- Assessment is not always used well enough to check pupils' understanding before moving on to new areas of learning. Consequently, some pupils develop gaps in their understanding, which hinders them from making connections between new and previous learning. The school should ensure that assessment is used consistently well across the curriculum, enabling gaps in pupils' learning to be identified and addressed promptly and learning to build well over time.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014.

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	132056
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10287986
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Keeler
Headteacher	Christine Easton
Website	www.st-marys-island-cofe-primary-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, music and history. For each deep dive, they 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 inspectors also spoke with leaders about the work the school is doing to improve pupils' attendance.

- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The views of pupils and staff were gathered through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of local governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Jo Brinkley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rosemary Keen

Ofsted Inspector

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