

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Pool Road, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7QU

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Owen Finnegan. This school is part of Our Lady of the Magnificat Multi-Academy Company, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the Catholic senior executive leader, Tom Leverage, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Yvonne Brennan.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Mary's Catholic Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school with a family feel. Staff know the pupils really well. There is a strong sense of pastoral care, which parents and carers value immensely. The school has high expectations for every pupil and support them to be the best they can be.

Leaders at all levels, supported by staff, are constantly striving to improve the quality of education that pupils experience. There is also a focus on developing the 'whole child' to prepare pupils for life after St Mary's. The school has established links with the local community, which gives pupils a sense of belonging in their local area.

Pupils are exceptionally polite. They greet visitors with a smile and make them feel welcome. Pupils get along with each other. There is a calm atmosphere around the school and lots of laughter. In most instances, pupils listen well and focus on their work. On the playground, pupils enjoy playing with their friends, working out on the exercise equipment, or simply having a chat.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value the information that the school shares with them about their children. In addition, they appreciate the visibility and caring nature of staff.

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

In the early years, positive relationships exist between staff and the children. Staff plan lots of enjoyable activities to support children's learning. However, in some areas of learning, the school has not mapped out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that children will learn in the early years.

The school has considered carefully what pupils will learn in a wide range of subjects. In many subjects, the curriculum clearly sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn within and across year groups. As a result, teachers are clear about what to teach and when to teach it. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not considered how the curriculum in Year 1 builds on what pupils have learned previously in the early years.

Reading is a high priority in the school. The school is working hard to foster a love of reading through the English curriculum, regular storytimes and a well-stocked, inviting library. The teaching of phonics is well ordered and builds pupils' phonics knowledge over time. Staff teach phonics effectively because they have been trained well. If needed, staff give pupils extra help so that they do not fall behind.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge in a range of curriculum areas. As a result, they explain new learning in a clear and well-structured manner. Teachers and teaching assistants model subject-specific language accurately, which pupils are themselves using when explaining their own understanding. However, teachers are

not routinely making checks on pupils' learning to identify any misconceptions. In addition, some learning activities are too easy, and some are too difficult.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accurately. Pupils with SEND are fully included in lessons and all aspects of school life. When required, staff provide extra support and additional resources to help pupils complete learning activities.

Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school. They speak confidently about the school's motto, 'Love to Learn and Learn to Love'. Pupils say the motto reminds them to be kind to everyone and to help each other. The school has forged links with the local community. For example, pupils sing songs at the nearby care home and they have adopted four war graves, which they look after and maintain. Pupils know about the different types of families that exist in their local community.. They speak positively about the popular after-school sporting clubs and the range of trips that they get to experience, including regular visits to the local forest. Pupils are very knowledgeable about online safety and the risks associated with the internet. However, their knowledge of different faiths and cultures is more limited.

School leaders, the multi-academy company and the local governing body work well as a team. Together, they keep a close eye on the quality of education and wider provision for the pupils in their care. However, they are not complacent and are always looking for further ways to make the school even better.

Staff enjoy working in the school and they wear the St Mary's badge with pride. They value the range of training they have received, such as the recent safeguarding training. Staff say that workload is manageable and school leaders do all they can to keep it at a reasonable level. Staff comment that leaders are always at hand to listen and provide help if needed. Staff describe school leaders as their 'champions'.

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 learning, the early years curriculum does not set out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that children will learn over time. Consequently, some learning activities do not fit into a well-ordered sequence of learning. The school should sequentially map out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that children will learn in all areas of learning in the early years.
- In a small number of subjects, the school has not considered how the curriculum in Year 1 builds on what pupils have learned in the early years. This slows pupils' learning. The school should ensure that in all subjects, the curriculum in Year 1 builds on and links to what pupils have learned in the early years.

- The school is not using formative assessment consistently well to identify pupils' misconceptions and ensure that learning activities are matched to pupils' needs. As a result, misconceptions are not being routinely addressed and work set can be too easy or too difficult. The school should ensure that staff use formative assessment consistently well to identify pupil misconceptions and to inform the selection of learning activities.

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	149316
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10267932
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	Board of directors
Chair of board	Yvonne Brennan
Headteacher	Owen Finnegan
Website	www.stmarysrcstudley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club. This provision is operated by an external provider.
- The school is part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. The school received its most recent Section 48 Catholic Schools Inspection in November 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 this into account in their evaluation.

- 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 met with the headteacher, five representatives of the multi-academy company and the chair of the local governing body. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders to discuss provision for pupils with SEND, pupils' behaviour, attendance, the early years, personal development and additional funding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and design and technology. 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.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school. Two separate groups of pupils accompanied inspectors on personal development learning walks around the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text responses received during the inspection. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's positional statement, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the local governing body.

Inspection team

Wayne Simner, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen O'Keefe

Ofsted Inspector

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