

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic Primary Academy

Swires Road, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX1 2ER

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 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 headteacher of this school is Jenna Walker. This school is part of Blessed Peter Snow 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, Richard Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Antonia Dorsey.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Catholic Primary Academy is a friendly and inclusive school. Staff have created an environment that helps pupils to feel happy, safe and welcome. This is a school where children come first. Staff get to know every pupil well. This gives pupils a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of safety and security.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. They are proud of their school and being part of the school community. Pupils behave well in lessons and do their best.

The school has high expectations of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the school has not ensured that pupils develop the depth of knowledge in some subjects that they should over time. Pupils learn less well in some subjects than others. The school has started to take the necessary steps to strengthen the curriculum in these subjects.

Pupils love the school grounds, where they learn and play. These spaces are a special feature of the school. Pupils enjoy learning about environmental issues in forest school. They benefit from leadership roles in school, such as school councillors, 'Mini Vinnies', sports leaders and 'kingdom kids'. These responsibilities prepare pupils well to become active, caring citizens.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. This includes a broad and balanced range of subjects. However, in some subjects, the school has not identified the precise knowledge, vocabulary and skills that pupils will learn. As a result, pupils do not learn, in depth, the important knowledge that they need for later learning.

In some subjects, including English and mathematics, leaders have carefully considered the knowledge that pupils will learn. Most teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. As a result, pupils build a strong understanding of the subjects.

Most subject leaders provide appropriate guidance for teachers about how to teach their subject curriculums effectively. However, sometimes, teachers do not use assessment strategies consistently well in lessons to check that pupils' understanding is secure. This means that pupils' misconceptions are not addressed effectively. As a result, some pupils, including those with SEND, do not achieve as well as they could.

The school places a high priority on teaching pupils to read. Leaders have developed the school library and other reading areas into vibrant places for pupils to enjoy. Pupils read a range of books by popular children's authors and poets. Leaders have made sure that staff have the training they need to deliver the school's early reading and phonics curriculums well. However, support for pupils who struggle to read is less successful. Pupils do not catch up as quickly as they should.

Children in the early years learn the school rules and routines quickly. For example, they listen carefully to staff and cooperate well with their classmates. Across the school, most pupils are attentive in lessons and keen to learn. Pupils focus well on their learning. Low-level disruption is rare, which means pupils can learn without disruption.

The school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is a strength. It teaches pupils how to keep healthy and safe, how to make friends and how to respect different cultures and traditions. Pupils talk confidently about the ways that people differ, but they say that everyone should be treated equally.

The school creates regular opportunities to engage with parents. Parents are positive about the school and feel well informed about all aspects of school life. Staff are proud to work at the school. They value being part of the trust and appreciate the support provided by trust leaders. Trust directors and those responsible for governance know the school well and work collaboratively with the school. They provide support and challenge in most areas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Support for pupils who struggle to read is inconsistent. Staff do not provide precise interventions that address gaps in pupils' learning. This means that these pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to catch up with their peers. The school should ensure that staff give pupils timely, focused support so that they can catch up quickly.
- In some subjects, the school has not identified the precise knowledge it wants pupils to know and remember. This hinders some teachers from designing learning for pupils. As a result, in some aspects of the curriculum, pupils do not develop and retain a deep enough subject understanding. The school should ensure that it identifies the precise knowledge that pupils will learn across all subjects, including when this should be taught.
- In some subjects, the school does not use suitable assessment strategies to identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. This means that some pupils do not make the progress they should. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to spot and then tackle pupils' misconceptions before deciding what they need to learn next.

Background

When we have judged good 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 predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, to be good in October 2013.

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	148657
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10297552
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	302
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Antonia Dorsey
Headteacher	Jenna Walker
Website	www.stmaryshalifax.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in July 2021. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Catholic Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a member of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school does not 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated during lessons and social times. The inspector spoke to pupils, teachers and leaders about their views on behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector met with a wide range of staff, including the headteacher and subject leaders. The inspector met with the school councillors and representatives from the trust for school improvement and SEND.
- The inspector considered a variety of school documents, including the school evaluation plan.
- The inspector took account of the views of staff, pupil and parents through surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Andy Hunt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023