

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

Manor Lane, Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 9DH

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 January 2024

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at school happy and ready to learn. Staff, along with the school's dog, greet them with a warm smile each morning. Pupils know that staff look after them and help with any problems that they may have. Pupils enjoy their learning.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievements. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, work hard to rise to these aspirations. Typically, they achieve well.

Pupils behave well during lessons. There is a calm atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils show respect for others, such as by listening to each other's points of view and beliefs. At social times, they enjoy the variety of equipment that is available to them. Pupils play happily together.

Pupils benefit from a range of residential trips that enrich the curriculum. During these visits, pupils take part in various outdoor and adventurous activities. This helps them to become resilient and independent young people.

Pupils develop their confidence and learn to care for others through many leadership roles. This includes being house captains, 'mini vinnies' and helping to care for children in the Reception class. Pupils are keen to take on extra responsibilities. They wear their badges and special hoodies with pride. Pupils develop the knowledge and attitudes necessary to succeed in life.

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

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. This sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn and the order that this should happen. This helps

pupils, including those with SEND, to learn well. They are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

Staff benefit from a well-designed programme of training and support. They are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. Staff explain information clearly and model subject-specific vocabulary well. They are adept at bringing lessons to life. Pupils are particularly inspired when learning about local history. Staff use a range of strategies to check on pupils' understanding. However, from time to time, they do not identify and remedy gaps in pupils' knowledge and vocabulary swiftly enough.

The school has prioritised early reading. Staff are well trained to deliver the phonics programme successfully. Children start to learn phonics from the beginning of the Reception Year. Pupils practise their phonics knowledge by reading from books that contain the sounds that they already know. Pupils who struggle with reading get the extra support that they need to learn all that they should. Most pupils read fluently and confidently by the time that they start key stage 2.

The school successfully promotes reading for enjoyment. For example, in the early years, children enjoy choosing their favourite books at story time. Older pupils were eager to tell the inspector about the books that their teachers are currently reading to them. Pupils are inspired to read by the pop-up book areas that staff have set up for them.

The school is ambitious for pupils with SEND. Staff accurately identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. They use this information diligently to design activities that enable these pupils to learn alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

From the beginning of the early years, children learn well-established routines. This helps them to settle into school quickly. Pupils are mature and work sensibly alongside their friends. They are motivated to learn and engage enthusiastically during lessons. Pupils understand the importance of attending school each day. The school works in partnership with external professionals and with families where pupils' attendance is low. As a result, attendance has started to improve.

The programme to support pupils' personal development prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the importance of equality, inclusion and tolerance. For example, pupils develop a strong respect for other faiths and cultures. The school supports pupils' emotional and mental well-being effectively. For example, pupils benefit from the school's calming nurture room.

Staff feel valued, and their morale is high. They are highly appreciative of the school's efforts to support their well-being and to reduce workload. For example, the school considers how best to implement new initiatives without overburdening staff. Governors use their experience and knowledge to support and challenge the school well to continue to improve the quality of education that it provides.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, staff do not identify and address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and vocabulary. This means that some pupils struggle to recall their learning. The school should ensure that staff help pupils to remember the content that they have been taught.

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 the school was judged 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 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	111340
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10313994
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Davis
Headteacher	Janet McKinlay
Website	www.stmarysmiddlewich.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Roman Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in March 2018. The school's next section 48 inspection is due before July 2025.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 that 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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders and members of staff. She held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also spoke with representatives of the diocese and of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector reviewed the curriculum in other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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