

Inspection of St Mary's CofE (VC) J and I School

Mill Bank, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire HX6 3EJ

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

What is it like to attend this school?

This rural village school is at the heart of the community. It is a warm and welcoming place. Pupils value the wealth of experiences that this small school offers. Families appreciate attending open mornings, performances and collective worship. Staff build positive relationships with parents and carers. This creates a supportive atmosphere where pupils achieve well.

Pupils work well together in class and during breaktimes. They are well-mannered and polite. This begins in Reception, where children learn how to manage their emotions and work with others. Older pupils model expected behaviour for younger children. Year 6 pupils act as prefects. They support younger children in practical ways. For example, they help them to achieve the 'golden knife and fork' award for their table manners.

The school curriculum is underpinned by the teaching of important life skills. Pupils are extremely well prepared to be active citizens in modern Britain. They reflect on national and global issues through weekly 'big questions'. Pupils are articulate. They share their views confidently. Pupils believe school gives them 'freedom to fly' by readying them for life beyond school.

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

The school has developed a well-sequenced curriculum. This is carefully planned to take account of mixed year group classes. The knowledge that pupils need to learn is clearly identified. Pupils connect their knowledge in meaningful ways. For example, older pupils discuss historical invasions and the concept of empire. They build on their knowledge of Vikings and Romans and relate this to current world situations where countries invade each other. Experiences, such as visits from a local historian and learning to play an instrument, further enhance this curriculum.

There is a clear structure and sequence for teaching children to read. This begins in Reception. Pupils learn how to read words and have daily practice in school. Staff work with parents to promote the importance of sharing stories. Parents provide support with further reading practice at home. This reading practice helps pupils to become fluent readers. Teachers and pupils enjoy stories. Teachers talk about the types of books that they choose to read to the class. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the different themes that these books explore.

The school is supporting teachers to build their expertise of effective assessment. However, this is at the early stages of development. The use of assessment by teachers to deepen pupils' thinking or address misconceptions is variable. This means that pupils can be kept waiting, having completed work, or be moved on before they are secure with their learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In Reception, children enjoy repeated reads of familiar stories. They join in with refrains and poems. This builds children's vocabulary. Activities are planned to support learning. For example, a construction activity on building tall structures helps children to think about balance. However, the implementation of the planned learning goals is variable. Questions and other strategies are not consistently used to deepen children's thinking.

Staff give pupils the opportunity to have a positive influence on school life. Pupils actively promote ecological action through the school council. They are aware that their steps may have a global impact. Councillors give out an eco-flag to pupils who live out these actions. 'Funky food' ambassadors lead informative assemblies. They promote healthy physical and mental health lifestyle choices. There is much demand from pupils to join a junior equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme that the school offers. Through this, pupils complete a raft of challenges from first aid to budgeting. This opportunity builds excellent life skills.

The school has deliberately woven key messages that their pupils need to learn throughout the curriculum. Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. Pupils knowledgeably discuss other cultures and countries. They see life through the eyes of people suffering discrimination. Pupils work diligently within the local community. The youngest go out litter-picking and older pupils organise an annual village owl hunt. The pupils create models of owls, using themes such as recycling, and hide them around the village. This helps to bring the community together.

Pupils learn the importance of managing finance. They apply their computer learning about spreadsheets to future careers. Pupils have many opportunities to develop a broad range of talents, such as competing in the 'physics olympics'. They compare different faiths and have opportunities to meet faith leaders. Pupils in Year 6 speak with maturity. They discuss equality and fairness with consideration for each other's views.

Staff value working with colleagues in the federation. They feel supported with their workload and well-being. Leaders know their school well. They provide effective support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variation in how well the school checks pupils' understanding in lessons. This can limit pupils' progression through some aspects of the

curriculum. The school should improve the ways that it checks pupils' understanding so that teaching supports their progression through the curriculum.

- There is variation in how planned learning opportunities are implemented in the early years. Questions are not used effectively to deepen children's learning. This means that children could make greater progress than they do. The school should improve the way it builds on children's existing knowledge to deepen their learning.

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

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| Unique reference number | 107538 |
| Local authority | Calderdale |
| Inspection number | 10297215 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 82 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | James Franklin-Smith |
| Headteacher | Yvette Sullivan (Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.st-marys.calderdale.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 10 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This school is one of two schools in the Calderdale Village Schools Federation, which was formed in September 2020.
- The school's executive headteacher works across two schools in the federation. There is also a head of school, who works at St Mary's CofE (VC) J and I School full time.
- The school is a member of the Diocese of Leeds and has a Christian character.
- The school's last section 48 inspection took place in July 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the executive headteacher, head of school, members of the leadership team, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the leaders responsible for safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: 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, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the school gate. The lead inspector took account of the views of staff and parents through surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.
- The lead inspector held separate meetings with the representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors, the local authority school improvement partner and the diocesan representative.

Inspection team

Lesley Sullivan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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