

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Mary of Charity C of E (Aided) Primary School

Orchard Place, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AP

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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 Louise Rowley-Jones. This school is part of Aquilla 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 (CEO), Annie Wiles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Butterworth.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being at this school. They understand the school's values, including respect, determination, honesty and forgiveness, and aspire to live up to them. Expectations are high. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places to learn. Pupils behave well and have positive relationships with staff. Children starting in Reception classes settle quickly because of the support they receive.

The school is ambitious for pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils embrace the learning opportunities that the school provides for them. This was exemplified in one parent's comment to inspectors, 'Teachers have been thoughtful about the support they provide and have enabled my child to be a successful and happy member of the school community.' As a result of the support and encouragement that pupils receive, they are keen to learn, and most achieve well during their time at the school.

Pupils are very proud of their school, eagerly undertaking leadership roles. These experiences help to develop their confidence and resilience. The leadership roles involve being playleaders, well-being leads, librarians and school counsellors. Pupils understand what it means to be a responsible member of the school. They are keen to make positive contributions that benefit the school community. Pupils develop confidence and resilience.

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

The school has rightly prioritised the development of an ambitious and well-planned curriculum, starting from the early years. A new rigorous phonics programme was introduced last year, and a new mathematics scheme is in the process of being implemented. As a result, in most subjects, the curriculum thinking clearly sets out the precise skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn. In a small number of other subjects, ongoing work is addressing an identified need to refine the curriculum further. This development work is having a positive impact on current pupils' achievement. However, much of the curriculum is new. As yet, the impact of this curriculum development work on pupils' outcomes, including recent statutory assessments, is still evolving. As a result, while pupils learn and recall important knowledge in their subjects, there are times when their understanding is not as secure and detailed as leaders intend.

Most subjects are taught well. In-depth curriculum thinking supports teachers' understanding of the subjects they teach. Staff are trained and supported well to implement the new curriculum successfully. This is especially evident in mathematics, where teachers bring the subject to life. New learning is broken down and explained in a way that helps pupils to understand. Pupils get plenty of practice with new concepts, which helps them to develop fluency. In most subjects, teachers use assessment well to understand what pupils do and do not know, and then use this information to adapt the learning. In a few subjects, the school is developing and refining how they do this, to ensure that the work given to pupils always builds precisely on what they already know.

Pupils are enthusiastic about books and reading. The school has created a culture where books are shared and enjoyed by all. The new phonics programme helps most pupils to learn to read quickly and accurately. Older pupils enjoy an array of authors through the books that are read to them by teachers. Pupils are encouraged to read at home. As a result, most pupils become confident and fluent readers. However, the small number of pupils who find learning to read difficult do not always receive the expert support that they need to catch up quickly with their peers.

Pupils behave well. The school has high expectations, which are consistently applied. Consequently, pupils are polite, thoughtful and caring towards each other. Parents say how apparent it is to see the values of the school played out each day. Pupils' attitudes are further enhanced by the school's well-organised personal, social, health and economic education provision and the broad range of trips and clubs on offer.

Pastoral care is a strength. Staff work closely with families to help improve pupils' attendance where this is necessary. The school is very inclusive. There are strong systems in place to identify and assess the needs of pupils with SEND. Detailed information helps teachers to provide pupils with well-considered support, reflecting high aspirations for every child. Consequently, pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points.

The school is well led. There is ongoing consideration of staff workload and well-being. Consequently, staff feel valued and supported. However, those responsible for governance

are not always sufficiently rigorous when checking that statutory duties are fulfilled and in challenging leaders about the quality of education.

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 in the early stages of learning to read is not always precise enough. Consequently, they do not catch up quickly with their peers. The school should ensure that expert teaching supports all pupils in swiftly becoming proficient readers.
- Plans to further refine curriculum planning and the use of assessment are not fully in place. Consequently, there are occasions when learning in lessons does not reflect leaders' ambition, or match pupils' needs, as well as it could. The school should ensure that current improvement work in these areas enables pupils to learn and achieve consistently well across the whole curriculum.
- Governance oversight of statutory duties and standards in the school is not always as precise as it could be. This reduces how effectively leaders are held to account for standards in the school. The board of trustees should ensure that it, and the governing body that supports it, has the shared knowledge and understanding to fulfil its role with even greater rigour so that standards are raised even further.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in July 2018.

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	141220
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296407
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Butterworth
CEO of the trust	Annie Wiles
Headteacher	Louise Rowley-Jones
Website	www.smcschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Canterbury. The school underwent a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools under section 48 of the Education Act in 2017. The next inspection is due within eight years of the previous inspection.
- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met and spoke with leaders, staff, pupils, parents, governors, trustees and the CEO of the trust.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with leaders to discuss curriculum thinking in history and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered 43 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey as well as the views of pupils that were gathered throughout the inspection.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with the school's special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector

His Majesty's 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 2024