

Inspection of a good school: St Mark's CofE Primary School

Aviary Road, Walkden, Worsley, Manchester M28 2WF

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

Outcome

St Mark's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in school. They spoke excitedly about the array of clubs and opportunities available to them. These appeal to a wide range of talents and interests and contribute strongly to pupils' wider development.

Pupils behave well. They are guided by the school's values and know how important it is to be trustworthy and respectful. Children in the early years develop strong learning behaviours quickly. They become increasingly independent and confident. Pupils throughout the school build securely on these firm foundations. They listen carefully in lessons and focus on the task in hand.

The school has unstintingly high expectations for pupils' achievement. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils benefit from warm and supportive relationships with staff. This gives them the confidence to try their best and to be unafraid to make mistakes. Pupils typically achieve well across a broad range of subjects. They achieve remarkably well in reading and mathematics. Pupils are confident and articulate when sharing their learning and expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Pupils take on positions of responsibility with enthusiasm because they want to make a difference. For example, pupils who are members of the school parliament are proud of their pivotal role in creating a quiet space in the playground.

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

Since the school was last inspected, it has not stood still. There has been an unswerving focus on continuing to strengthen the quality of education that pupils receive. The school has carefully organised the curriculum from the Nursery Year through to the end of key stage 2. This curriculum is ambitious for pupils, including those with SEND. The school identifies the additional needs of these pupils quickly and accurately. Recent training has equipped teachers with a range of approaches to adapt the way in which they design learning. This supports pupils, including those with SEND, to learn the curriculum well.

The school has developed strong staff expertise across many aspects of its work, including subject leadership. Teachers benefit from high-quality resources to support them in their design and delivery of lessons. This has a positive impact in reducing teachers' workload, as well as enhancing pupils' learning. Staff are overwhelmingly proud and happy to work at the school.

The school has identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should be taught in most subjects. It has thought carefully about how to check on pupils' learning. Consequently, teachers are adept at introducing new learning at just the right time. They ensure that pupils build on their knowledge successfully.

In a small number of curriculums, the school continues to pinpoint the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. This means that, at times, teachers are unsure what knowledge they should emphasise and rehearse until it is secure in pupils' memories. While pupils spoke with assurance about what they know already and their new learning in most subjects, their knowledge is less secure in these few remaining subjects.

The school has placed reading at the forefront of its curriculum. It has built the curriculum around ambitious texts that help pupils to deepen their learning in other subjects, and to explore the rich diversity of our world. Pupils understand the importance of reading. They regularly read for pleasure and enjoy selecting books to match their interests.

The school makes sure that staff are well trained to teach pupils to read. Children learn phonics successfully from the moment that they enter the Reception Year. The books that the youngest readers take home are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to gain the phonics knowledge that they need to be successful readers. If pupils struggle with their reading, the school ensures that they get the help that they need to read with increasing fluency and accuracy.

Children in the early years settle quickly and happily into school. They listen, take turns and follow well-established routines. Older pupils work conscientiously. They rarely need to be reminded how to behave.

The school places a high priority on supporting pupils to attend well. It has taken effective action to reduce the small number of pupils who are absent from school too often. These pupils' rates of attendance are improving as a result.

The school prepares pupils for life in British society well. Pupils develop an understanding of values such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. The school also encourages pupils to aim high for their future lives. For example, it involves parents, carers and members of the community in careers days. Pupils relish the weekly Tech-Talk Tuesday where they learn how to use technology safely and responsibly. By the time that pupils reach Year 6, they have the self-assurance and skills necessary to be ready for their next stage of education.

Governors offer appropriate support and challenge to the school to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education.

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 small number of subjects, there is a lack of clarity about the essential knowledge that teachers should focus on when they design learning. This means that some pupils do not recall and build on prior learning as well as they could. The school should ensure that, in these few remaining subjects, teachers know precisely what knowledge must be taught, emphasised and recalled to support pupils' future learning more effectively.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2019.

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	105949
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10321292
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	William Macdonald
Headteacher	Louise Mansfield
Website	www.stmarksce.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in March 2019. The school is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's educational 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in school. She spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and mathematics. She spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. She also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- The inspector also spoke with leaders and reviewed a sample of pupils' work in other subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. She spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- The inspector spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, 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