

# Inspection of St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Kirkley Cliff Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0DG

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Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The head of school is Ewa Parker and the executive headteacher is Helen Armstrong. The school is part of St. John The Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Kim Payne, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ruth Hollis.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils here are well cared for. Their teachers are kind and supportive and listen to any concerns they may have. This assures pupils that they are kept safe.

The school sets high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils reflect these in their positive and respectful attitudes, both in and out of lessons. Pupils demonstrate the school's 'STAR' values throughout the school day. They listen well to their teachers and each other.

Pupils enjoy learning and find lessons interesting. Staff have high ambitions for everyone. Pupils rise to this by concentrating hard and trying their best. Pupils are encouraged to explore new learning. Current work in books shows pupils are well supported to meet the aims of the curriculum.

Pupils participate in environmental projects. For example, older pupils have worked with a local environmentalist, gathering plastics from the beach in front of their school grounds and learning about the impact of plastics in the ocean.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs in sports, science, arts and gardening. They learn new skills and develop their interests. They have meaningful opportunities to develop their leadership and teamwork skills through school council, reading buddy and house captain roles.

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

The school has successfully steered its way through a period of change and managed significant changes in staffing and curriculum leadership. Some of this turbulence has impacted on recent published outcomes. However, leaders' swift and decisive actions have recently improved the curriculum. This is now well planned and taught. As a result, pupils are now achieving well across the curriculum.

From early years upwards, the school's curriculum is ambitious and builds and connects pupils' knowledge effectively over time. This helps teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. However, in a few subjects, the checks on what pupils have learned are not designed precisely enough to ensure pupils can recall exactly the key detailed knowledge intended. This oversight means that teachers are less clear as to the extent of gaps in pupils' knowledge and sometimes move on before learning is fully secure.

Pupils learn to read as soon as they join the Reception class. Teachers are well trained to ensure pupils in the younger years learn the sounds that letters make. They ensure pupils can blend these sounds together to read words and sentences. Teachers make daily checks on how well pupils are learning to read. Younger pupils read books that help them practise the sounds they know and so are developing fluency. The school provides swift and effective additional support for pupils who need to catch up. However, there are occasions where older pupils have books that

are not well matched to their reading abilities. This is because the reading curriculum from Year 3 to Year 6 is less precise in identifying how reading knowledge builds once pupils have mastered phonics. While pupils still achieve well in reading, this impacts on those older pupils who find reading trickier or those who could be accessing more-challenging texts.

The school carefully identifies how the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can be met. Where appropriate, staff make subtle adaptations to the curriculum, such as providing additional resources in mathematics. This means that pupils with SEND successfully meet their specific learning targets.

Pupils behave respectfully. In early years, children learn to share, take turns and concentrate when listening to adults. Reception children display resilience in their learning, for example when searching for pictures of animals in their outside area and recording the numbers found. Older pupils are polite and courteous. The school takes effective action to ensure pupils attend school.

The school has ensured that pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils understand tolerance and respect. They are accepting of each other's differences. They learn about diversity through lessons, assemblies, trips and visits. They are taught to be active citizens through fundraising, raising awareness about climate change and supporting community events. Elections to the school council and eco-council firm their understanding of democracy. They have a good awareness of other religions and cultures. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors and trustees hold leaders effectively to account for school improvement. Trust leaders are instrumental in providing training for staff. This grows expertise and ensures staff are well supported to perform their roles well.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The reading books chosen by older pupils are not always closely matched to their reading ability. This can hinder how well pupils catch up or means pupils are not extending their reading further. Teachers need to ensure that the reading curriculum is precise about the key reading knowledge older pupils need to know and that reading books to rehearse these skills are well matched to this curriculum.
- In a few subjects, checks on what pupils know and remember are not fully developed. This means that in these few subjects, staff cannot precisely identify whether pupils have fully secured the knowledge in the depth intended or if gaps

remain. The school should ensure that it checks robustly how well pupils can recall the knowledge needed to meet the ambitious curriculum aims.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142806
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323767
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	182
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ruth Hollis
<b>Head of school</b>	Ewa Parker
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysrcps.com">www.stmarysrcps.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School is part of the St John The Baptist Catholic Multi Academy Trust, which it joined in 2016.
- This is a school with a Catholic ethos within the Diocese of East Anglia. The school received its most recent section 48 inspection on 8 March 2018 and should be reinspected approximately five years from then.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative education providers.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club on site, run by school staff.

## 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 educational 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 met with the head of school, executive headteacher, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the interim chief executive officer, interim deputy chief executive officer and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also sampled pupils' work in other curriculum areas.
- 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 created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including local governing body meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation document, the school's improvement plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and the school's equalities action plan.
- Inspectors spoke with parents about their children's experiences of the school. they considered the 34 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 34 free-text responses, as well as 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 42 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Stephen Cloke, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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