

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School

48 Brayards Road, London SE15 3RA

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school where pupils feel safe in a caring and harmonious environment. Pupils are kind to each other, with older pupils helping their younger peers. They act on the school's values, including honesty, trust and peace. They do this by being considerate of each other, promoting a calm environment, and owning up if they have made a mistake. Pupils said that bullying is not a problem, with rare occurrences tackled quickly. One parent and carer, whose views were representative of many others, commended the school for being a 'safe, secure and happy place'.

The school's curriculum includes an emphasis on developing pupils' character and resilience. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and how to look after their physical and mental health. If they are worried about anything, they know how to communicate their concerns to a trusted adult.

The school has been through a period of change. Current leaders have made improvements to the curriculum. However, these changes are not, at present, fully effective. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not developing their learning as securely as they should.

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

The school has been through a difficult time. To manage falling numbers of pupils on roll, leaders and governors have reorganised the school. They have created mixed-age classes, with each class covering two year groups. To boost numbers, they have also opened a new Nursery class. Additionally, they have successfully taken steps to make sure that pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to their learning. The school now identifies pupils with SEND swiftly. As a result, the school is now stable again. Parents praise recent changes and value the school's 'community feel'. The school is a positive place for pupils to learn, characterised by respectful interactions.

Everyone, including those responsible for governance, is committed to improving the school's work for the benefit of all pupils. The school has taken steps to redesign its curriculum, but some aspects are still in development. Staff have not currently received all the additional training that they need to teach the curriculum over time and check that all pupils have learned it. As a result, there is sometimes a lack of clarity about how to teach the most important concepts that pupils need to know. For example, pupils do not understand many of the key ideas in the geography curriculum, like the difference between a country and a region. In some subjects, there are occasions when pupils have copied answers into their books without understanding the subject content and what they have written. As a result, the curriculum does not, at present, ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should, including pupils with SEND. These shortcomings are evident in what pupils know and can do across the curriculum, and in pupils' work.

In mathematics, teachers generally have secure subject knowledge. They explain information clearly. Pupils use precise mathematical vocabulary when answering questions. For example, they explain exactly how to extract information from graphs. Staff give pupils apparatus to help them visualise the aspects of mathematics which they are learning. Sometimes, pupils are not sure how to use this apparatus, which then becomes a distraction. Some work is incomplete in pupils' books and sometimes errors are not corrected by teachers. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, do not always have the secure understanding that they need before they are taught new content.

The school is determined for every pupil to learn to read. It has successfully addressed previous shortcomings in this area of the curriculum. The school engaged with its local English hub to ensure that effective training was in place for staff to teach the phonics scheme. Assessment procedures have been strengthened. This means that any pupils who are falling behind are quickly spotted and given the help that they need. Older pupils who are still at an early stage of learning to read receive expert teaching to build their fluency and accuracy. As a result, pupils read widely and with enjoyment.

The school has thought carefully about its newly expanded early years provision. The environment is well designed. Staff interact skilfully with children to promote their independence and communication. As a result, children focus on their play and learning for extended periods of time and learn a wide vocabulary. This prepares them well for their future learning. The curriculum is ambitious for all children and meets the needs of those with SEND particularly well.

Attendance rates at the school are above national figures. The school has robust systems to identify pupils who are not attending school regularly. Leaders work closely with families, where necessary, to improve pupils' attendance.

The school promotes pupils' broader development well. Pupils learn about and experience life outside of school. For example, they regularly visit a local care home to sing songs with the residents. Pupils also take part in a wide range of charity fundraising events. The school's approach to teaching pupils about positive behaviour includes a strong moral focus on doing the right thing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not made sure that staff have had appropriate training on subject-specific knowledge. Staff are sometimes unclear about which are the most important concepts that pupils need to know and how to check pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils do not build a secure depth of knowledge in

some subjects. The school should ensure that staff receive the training that they need to develop their expert knowledge of the subjects they teach, including how to check purposefully what pupils know and remember.

- Sometimes, the tasks and resources which are chosen do not help pupils to learn the required subject content. As a result, pupils do not focus on the most important information and staff do not identify their misunderstandings. The school should ensure that staff are given the training and guidance that they need to present information clearly and adapt teaching when necessary to correct pupils' misunderstandings.

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	100836
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10227035
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	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sonia Phippard and Rev Jo Lewis (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Anna Harding
Website	www.smmprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary Magdalene Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school's last section 48 inspection of its religious character took place in May 2019.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. They spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- 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.
- The inspectors spoke to a range of staff members and considered the views of parents who made responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Julian Grenier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sabrina Edwards

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