

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Marys CofE Primary School

Poynton Road, Shawbury, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 4JR

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 December 2024

Outcome

St Marys CofE Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Sarah North. This school is part of Empower Multi-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, Carla Whelan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Bunting.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children and pupils thrive in this caring and inclusive school. They have complete confidence that all staff have their best interests at heart. Consequently, pupils enjoy school life immensely.

High expectations of behaviour start in the nursery, where children are quickly helped to understand sharing, turn-taking and considering others. All pupils are actively taught how to behave well. The six school values are modelled by every member of staff daily, and pupils understand how these help them to do what is right. Kindness to each other is the norm.

Pupils achieve well because the school sets high standards and ensures that every pupil is supported to do their best. Pupils enjoy their learning. They speak with enthusiasm of what they can do and what they will be learning about next.

The school has made pupils' personal development a priority. Pupils value the many clubs, visits and visitors they have. The recently introduced Enrichment Fridays are very popular. Pupils can select from a carefully designed range of opportunities to develop their cultural understanding, gain life skills and access new interests. As a result, pupils are excited about their experiences, and they look forward to the next opportunity to find out more about the world around them.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum that has reading at its heart. Pupils learn to read quickly and those who struggle are very well supported. Across the curriculum pupils are taught effective strategies to help them read, comprehend and analyse texts across all subjects. The school has introduced a range of activities, including opportunities for parents to come into school and read with their children. These are helping to foster a love of reading for pleasure. The well-stocked library area is encouraging pupils to read more widely and more often.

Subject curriculums are well organised. The school has ensured that careful thought has been given to what needs to be learned and in what order from the early years onwards. This is understood and implemented by teachers. Early English and mathematics are taught effectively so that children are well prepared for learning in key stage 1 and beyond. Pupils take pride in their achievements and try hard to present their work well. However, historically, there has not been enough focus on developing pupils' ability to record their learning and ideas clearly and legibly. Consequently, previous learning is not always easily accessible to them. The school is aware that more work is needed to improve this aspect, particularly for older pupils.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and well-developed teaching skills. This means that pupils are nearly always supported effectively to build on their knowledge and skills over time. However, occasionally, work is not as well matched to pupils' readiness to learn as it could be. As a result, a few pupils do not progress as quickly as they could.

Teachers make sure that there are regular opportunities to check pupils' learning in the classroom. This means that any misconceptions are recognised and addressed quickly so that learning is not slowed down. More formal checks ensure that teachers can identify knowledge gaps that may require adaptations of the curriculum. However, sometimes, these checks do not include consideration of the skills that pupils require for success in foundation subjects. For example, pupils are not always helped to understand how subject knowledge has been built over time and the strengths and weaknesses of established practices. This means that some pupils may not build the relevant understanding as quickly as they could.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well because their needs are quickly identified and appropriate support put in place. The school has developed a transition programme that ensures that needs are recognised from the point of entry to the school, allowing a rapid response from nursery onwards. Regular checks, reviews and consultation with parents make sure that pupils with SEND are making the progress they should.

Pupils are exceptionally well behaved because they are taught the importance of thinking about others as well as themselves at every opportunity. Consequently, they enjoy coming to school, so nearly all pupils attend well. Where this is not the case, the school works very effectively with children and their families to ensure that the root causes are understood and addressed with care. The school has focused on regular communication with parents and instilling a strong sense of belonging among pupils. This has paid dividends, reducing suspensions and exclusions significantly. As a result, nearly all pupils are in school when they should be.

There is a comprehensive provision for pupils' personal development. Pupils have access to many opportunities, both in school and beyond, that are specifically designed to broaden horizons, raise awareness of the broader community and prepare them for their next steps.

School, trust and diocesan leaders work together very effectively to ensure that the needs of pupils are at the centre of their work. Governors and trustees have a thorough understanding of the school and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Staff are very proud to work at this school. They feel valued and supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Until recently, the school has not focused enough on ensuring that pupils can record their learning clearly and legibly. This means that important information they have recorded as part of their learning is sometimes inaccessible. The school should make sure that the work started to address this is continued, and accelerated where necessary, particularly for older pupils.
- Occasionally, work set does not match well enough to the stage at which pupils should be learning. This means that sometimes pupils do not make as much progress as they could. The school should check that pupils are always set work at an appropriate level.
- Sometimes, assessment does not consider whether pupils are building the right skills to support their learning. In these cases, pupils do not always understand what they need to do to deepen their knowledge and develop subject expertise. The school should make sure that, over time, assessments check how well pupils have understood the disciplinary aspects of learning as well as factual recall.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 predecessor school, St Mary's CofE Primary School, the school to be good for overall effectiveness in October 2016

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	147568
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10344165
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Bunting
CEO of the trust	Carla Whelan
Headteacher	Sarah North
Website	www.shawburystmarys.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school within the Empower Trust in October 2019. When its predecessor school, St Mary's CofE Primary School, was last inspected, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2021.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative provision.
- St Mary's CofE Primary School received its last statutory inspection under section 48 by the Church of England Education Office in March 2024. The next inspection under section 48 is due to take place in 2029.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees, the finance officer, the chair of the local governing board, other governors and a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- 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 considered the survey responses of staff, pupils and parents.
- The inspector spoke directly with some parents.
- The inspector visited the before- and after-school club sessions.

Inspection team

Mel Ford, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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