

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Normandy, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1JL

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Inspection dates:

7 and 9 January 2025

## **Outcome**

St Mary's CofE (Aided) Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

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

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They are kind and respectful towards one another. Those who arrive mid-year or mid-phase are welcomed warmly and helped to settle into the school's well-established routines. Pupils report feeling safe, happy and well supported by adults in school. This view is reflected in the daily workings of the school, where pupils behave well and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. New routines and equipment have enhanced the quality of play during social times, which pupils appreciate.

The school incorporates pupils from a broad and growing range of backgrounds and cultures. An increasing number are new to the country and speak English as an additional language. Staff plan carefully the extra help pupils may need to access their learning, taking their different circumstances into account. This enables pupils to be prepared successfully for secondary education, realising the school's high expectations for their academic learning.

Equally, pupils are prepared comprehensively for life as a 21st century citizen in a culturally diverse Britain. Older pupils appreciate their opportunities to contribute to the life of the school, such as by being playground or worship leaders.

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

The school has changed in many ways since the last inspection. Existing strengths around behaviour and personal development have been retained. Priorities linked to the quality of education have been identified and are being addressed. Leaders and governors are focusing on the right things, making sensible use of external support to aid them. For example, they have swiftly tackled a recent dip in phonics outcomes at the end of Year 1

by reviewing and developing how phonics is taught in school. Subsequent improvements in staff knowledge and confidence have developed the consistency of teaching. As a result, pupils' outcomes in 2024 increased to be in line with national statistics. Alongside this, the school invests thoughtfully and enthusiastically in its work to instil a love of reading in all pupils. Staff model reading for pleasure, and pupils enjoy using their rejuvenated library. Reluctant readers are encouraged and supported to engage with books in a range of different ways while barriers to their participation are explored and addressed.

Senior leaders recognised that work to review and revise the whole curriculum could not be tackled successfully in one go. They sensibly prioritised which subjects were urgent to address last year and which could wait because they already met pupils' needs sufficiently well. This has helped to keep staff workload manageable through this period of change while making necessary improvements to content and sequencing in English and some wider curriculum subjects. As a result, almost all subjects now have knowledge and skills mapped out logically and coherently from Reception to Year 6. As staff teach the new curriculum for the first time, leaders at all levels intend to evaluate the impact on pupils' learning so that further refinements can be made where needed.

Pupils' love of school is evident in their high attendance rates and their positive attitudes to learning. Rates of persistent absence, including for vulnerable pupils, are relatively low. Rigorous systems and clear processes ensure that parents and carers understand the importance of their children coming to school. They are supported in overcoming any hurdles they may face in achieving this ambition.

The school's cohort is increasingly diverse. Leaders take every opportunity to embrace the opportunities that this presents to enhance the cultural richness of the school. For example, in assemblies, they celebrate and share the different languages that pupils speak. The school's personal development programme is thoughtful and comprehensive. It balances the legal requirements for relationships education sensitively alongside the school's religious context. This helps pupils to understand the world they live in, promoting fundamental British values such as acceptance.

Arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fit for purpose. Pupils' additional needs are identified precisely. Staff receive useful training that helps them understand and meet pupils' needs in the classroom. Where necessary, leaders work determinedly to help pupils and their families access the specialist assistance they need.

Governance has undergone a recent transition, with a number of new people joining the governing body. Through this period of change, governors have sensibly used experts from beyond the school to scrutinise the impact of work to address key areas of focus. They are beginning to consider how to widen their oversight of the quality of education, so it routinely stretches beyond the school's current development priorities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Work to revise the curriculum has been deliberately planned over a two-year cycle. Some changes are quite new and others are taking place this year. Consequently, the precision of curriculum sequencing and use of assessment to refine future learning is variable across the range of subjects. The school should ensure its current work to develop the quality of education enables pupils to learn consistently well across the whole curriculum.
- Some checks on standards, particularly relating to the quality of education, are not as comprehensive as they could be. This risks leaders and governors losing sight of some aspects of provision while they focus on others. The school should review and refine its approach to monitoring so that no aspect of the school declines while another part is the focus of improvement.

## 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 school to be good for overall effectiveness 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126029
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10341628
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Steve Allen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma McLaughlin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk">www.stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	30 and 31 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is a voluntary aided Church of England primary school.
- The headteacher and chair of governors were not in post at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher joined the school in April 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The last section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2018. The school is due to receive its next inspection by the end of August 2026.
- Breakfast and after-school care is provided by an external company.

## 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspection started on 7 January 2025. It was paused in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. An inspector returned on 9 January 2025 to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders and spoke to groups of pupils and staff. On the second day, the lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority and spoke to a diocesan representative on the telephone.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered arrangements for monitoring behaviour and attendance and for pupils' personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

### **Inspection team**

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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