

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England School

Keen Close, Fairford Leys, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 7WF

Inspection dates:	28 and 29 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Bennett. This school is part of Oxford Diocesan Bucks School Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sulina Piesse, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Mill.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, polite and welcoming at this school. The school's vision of 'shine as lights in the world' is visible in this nurturing community. The school is ambitious for all its pupils, and staff want the best for every child. The key school values of resilience, integrity and respect can be seen in the way staff and pupils work together.

Pupils behave well and know who to go to if they have a problem. They acknowledge that bullying does occur, but the school have systems and processes in place to ensure any matters are dealt with swiftly. Pupils describe the school as 'nice', 'amazing' and 'caring'.

There are supportive relationships between staff and pupils. From the early years onwards, pupils are taught clear routines and expectations to enable them to become active citizens in the school.

There are a variety of clubs and extracurricular activities. Pupils enjoy an array of clubs, for example, chess, cross country and Lego. The curriculum is enhanced with well-planned trips and visits. For example, pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences on residential trips and the visit to the O2 Arena for Young Voices. These experiences help to deepen their learning.

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

Since the previous inspection, the curriculum across the school has been reviewed and refined. The school has thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and remember. The curriculum is ambitious and captures the interests of pupils. This means that pupils achieve well and are prepared for their next stage of education.

In many subjects, the curriculum is well-structured from the early years to Year 6. For example, in mathematics, the content is broken down into small steps to help pupils build their knowledge over time. Carefully structured tasks help pupils connect and consolidate what they already know. However, some subjects are at an earlier stage of development. In these subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they could. As a result, they do not always develop a secure and deep understanding over time. The school is aware of this and has plans to address it in a well-structured way.

Reading is prioritised across the school. This begins straight away in the early years, where pupils are surrounded by inviting books. Pupils learn sounds through rhymes, songs and listening to stories. Teachers read to their classes daily, selecting texts that bring variety, diversity and high levels of engagement. Staff deliver the phonics programme with expertise. Pupils' books are matched to the sounds they are learning in their phonics lessons. Staff provide intervention and support for pupils to help them keep up. A love of reading is encouraged successfully throughout the school. Pupils enjoy choosing high-quality texts from the well-resourced library. This helps to motivate pupils to read often.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known well by staff. As a result, their needs are identified and understood. Adaptations to help pupils learn are usually appropriate. Pupils with SEND enjoy learning alongside their peers. They achieve well at the end of key stage 2. However, there are inconsistencies in checking whether pupils with SEND benefit as much as possible from their learning. This means that these checks are not always carried out effectively to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to make the best possible progress. The school is continuing to strengthen this process.

Pupils, including those in the early years, behave well in and around the school. Pupils really value the school's rules and rewards. Positive relationships and clear expectations enable pupils to concentrate and enjoy their work. The few pupils who find it difficult to manage their emotions and behaviour receive help to quickly refocus on their learning in appropriate ways. Robust and effective systems are in place to ensure that pupils continue to attend school regularly and on time.

The school's work to develop pupils' personal development is effective. Pupils learn to respect differences and diversity. They know that others may have different faiths, beliefs and cultures, and they understand that families are not all the same. Pupils enjoy lots of musical and sporting activities. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their own leadership skills. Pupils are proud to take on positions of responsibility within the school, such as being school councillors and play leaders. These opportunities enable pupils to play an active role in their school community.

The trust offers strong support, challenge and guidance, which the school welcomes and embraces. Staff are proud to work at the school and appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being. Staff morale is high due to the strong shared vision of high-quality education for all pupils.

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 few wider curriculum subjects, the curriculum is not sufficiently well designed to help pupils consistently build on what they already know and can do. As a result, pupils do not always develop a secure and deep understanding over time. The school should strengthen its approaches to checks on pupils' learning so it can identify and address gaps in learning as swiftly as possible.
- Checks on the effectiveness of the support provided for pupils with SEND are not consistently in place. As a result, some pupils do not always make the best possible progress. The school must ensure that provision for pupils with SEND is always precisely targeted to the needs of each pupil.

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	147876
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10341884
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	449
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Mill
CEO of the trust	Sulina Piesse
Headteacher	Lisa Bennett
Website	www.st-marysaylesbury.bucks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's C of E Primary School converted to become an academy school within the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust in March 2020. When its predecessor school, St Mary's C of E Primary School, was last inspected, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2023.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.
- St Mary's C of E Primary School received its last statutory inspection under section 48 by the Church of England Education Office in March 2018. The next inspection under section 48 is due to take place in 2025.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the board of trustees, the local governing body, the chief executive officer and a representative of the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects in the curriculum.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- Inspectors looked at the school's own evaluation and development plans.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors met with parents to gather their views and opinions about the school.

Inspection team

David Harris, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mineza Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Henderson	Ofsted Inspector

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