

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Swithun's Catholic Primary School

Taswell Road, Southsea, Hampshire PO5 2RG

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 February 2025

Outcome

St Swithun's Catholic Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this happy and welcoming school. They behave exceptionally well and show consistently high levels of respect towards each other and staff. The St Swithun's mission, 'love one another as I have loved you', can be seen being lived out through the actions of the whole school community.

Pupils settle quickly whenever they join. Throughout the school adults engage pupils in high-quality interactions and involve them in meaningful learning experiences. Independence and resilience are nurtured. When pupils or families need help, it is given with sensitivity.

Staff have high expectations and expect pupils to work hard. From the beginning of their journey in the school, pupils enthusiastically rise to meet these expectations and enjoy their learning. The vast majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education because they build secure knowledge in many areas of the curriculum.

The school provides rich personal development opportunities, including cultural activities, trips, sporting events and many clubs. Pupils enjoy these and take part enthusiastically. The school has a well-established pastoral system that ensures pupils are safe and feel safe. As one pupil said, 'We know we are cared for here.'

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

The school has constructed an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. The knowledge and skills that pupils should learn have been set out from pre-school to Year

6 over a two-year cycle. In most subjects these are precise and clear. Where appropriate, subjects are connected and the local area and context are used to bring learning to life. For example, in history and geography, pupils study the causes of the Second World War. They look at how it affected their local area and visit nearby museums. In the pre-school, staff provide high-quality learning opportunities for all the children.

Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. The school prioritises professional development. It provides teachers and other staff with time to share knowledge and learn from other professionals. Teachers across the school explain subject matter clearly and pupils are engaged in their learning. This means that pupils build knowledge and achieve well. Teachers check on pupils' knowledge and understanding regularly. However, in some subjects the information gained is not yet used to adapt activities or to structure future learning. This means that some pupils are not always learning as well as they could be.

In every year group, the pupils at St Swithun's love stories and reading. Staff are well trained, and children start to learn sounds that letters make from when they join the school. Pupils who need support are quickly identified and helped to catch up. Reading books are well matched to the sounds that they know. In key stage 2, the school's approach to teaching reading helps pupils to develop a deep understanding of the carefully chosen texts.

The school has worked to strengthen its provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are supported well and their needs are met in a personalised and sensitive manner. There are robust strategies in place that support staff to identify needs early and make any necessary changes to support learning.

The school provides a rich and nurturing environment that promotes pupils' broader development. The curriculum is enhanced through a variety of enrichment activities. These include theme days, visits linked to the curriculum, guest speakers and a range of clubs. There is a strong take up by all pupils of these opportunities. The school encourages discussions on inclusion and respect for different cultures and beliefs. This helps ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils behave well because policies are clear and expectations are understood throughout the school community. Pupils play an active role in school life, contributing to decision-making through school council and ambassador roles. They feel valued and listened to. The school fosters a strong sense of responsibility among pupils, encouraging them to contribute positively to the school and wider community.

Leaders have a good understanding of their school and make accurate observations and judgements. They have taken action to maintain a high-quality education. Staff are unanimously positive about working at the school and feel their time and efforts are valued by leaders and parents. In turn, parents are overwhelmingly positive about the experience their children have at St Swithun's. A comment that sums up the views of

many is, 'This school has given my child the best possible start to their education journey.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently use information gained when checking pupils' understanding. This affects how some pupils build knowledge over time, particularly in the wider curriculum subjects. The school should ensure that it supports teachers to adjust activities and their teaching appropriately so that pupils learn as well as the school intends them to.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in February 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	116386
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10341451
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cara Guedeney
Headteacher	Jennifer Verhiest
Website	www.sscps.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been two changes of headteacher since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher at the previous inspection was appointed substantive headteacher in February 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has extended its pre-school since the last inspection and now has provision for two-year-olds.
- This is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Portsmouth. Its last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in November 2019.
- The school has a before- and after-school club.

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.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and a range of school staff. The inspector also met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including those relating to behaviour, attendance, governance and leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school and to talk about their work. The inspector also held informal conversations with pupils.
- The inspector considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspector also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for school staff.
- 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.

Inspection team

Tracy Good, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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