Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's Primary School Knaresborough, A Voluntary Catholic Academy

Tentergate Road, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 9BG

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 March 2025

Outcome

St Mary's Primary School Knaresborough, A Voluntary Catholic Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Helen Tomlinson. This school is part of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic 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 (CEO), Darren Beardsley, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Mills.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's provides a welcoming school community where pupils flourish. Pupils form very warm relationships with school staff and with each other. This helps pupils to be happy and feel safe. Older pupils are proud to be positive role models. They look out for their younger 'buddies'.

The school has high expectations of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is rooted in the local area wherever possible. Pupils find lessons relevant and interesting. They try hard and are proud of their work. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils behave very well. They respond positively to the school's high expectations and guidance. Pupils learn a new 'virtue to live by' every three weeks. These include values such as kindness, thankfulness and resilience. There is very little bullying. Pupils trust staff to sort out any issues if things go wrong.

The school provides exceptional opportunities to support pupils' personal development. Trips and visitors enhance the curriculum. A range of after-school clubs help pupils to

develop their talents and interests. Pupil leaders, such as school councillors, play leaders and Year 6 buddies, make a valuable contribution to school life. The 'mini Vinnies' do a wonderful job of helping others in the wider community.

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

The curriculum is logically organised so that pupils build on their prior learning. For example, pupils in Year 2 learn defending skills in physical education lessons. Pupils put these skills to good use when they learn to play tag rugby in Year 3. Teachers use assessment effectively to check what pupils know and remember. They use a range of strategies, such as repetition and quizzes, to help pupils remember more. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present information clearly. As a result of expert teaching, pupils build a deep knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

Reading is a high priority. The school promotes reading for pleasure through special events such as World Book Day. Teachers read to their classes often. Regular library sessions and inviting reading areas provide pupils with a range of texts to enjoy. Year 6 pupils buddy up with children in the Reception Year to enjoy paired reading sessions.

Children in the Reception Year get off to a strong start in reading. Teachers follow the school's chosen phonics programme closely. This helps children to remember the sounds they have learned. Pupils who need extra support to catch up in reading benefit from timely intervention. This helps them to develop confidence and fluency with reading.

The school makes sure that pupils quickly become secure in the basics of mathematics and reading. This provides pupils with a firm foundation for their future learning. However, the school does not have a strategy for helping pupils who have fallen behind with their writing. As a result, some pupils struggle with writing tasks. This is because they do not have secure basic writing skills.

Provision for pupils with SEND is a strength of the school. Staff are well trained to recognise when pupils have additional needs. They know pupils well. As a result, pupils who need extra support are quickly identified. Carefully planned adaptations help pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum alongside their peers. Calm breakout spaces are available for pupils when needed. This helps pupils who sometimes struggle with self-regulation.

The school prepares pupils well to become responsible, respectful and active citizens. Fundamental British values and the school's 'virtues to live by' are woven throughout the curriculum. They are part of everyday life in school. Pupils learn about a wide range of people who are positive role models, for example composers, musicians and scientists who represent a range of protected characteristics. This helps pupils to develop empathy and respect for others and to believe in themselves. They learn that anything is possible regardless of ethnicity, culture or background.

School leaders, governors and the trust are committed to making sure that the interests of pupils are at the heart of every decision. Staff know that leaders consider their

workload and well-being when making changes that affect them. Staff speak highly of the training they receive and the opportunities for sharing good practice with colleagues across the trust. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and all it has to offer.

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 does not have effective arrangements for helping pupils who have not secured the basics of writing to catch up. This results in some pupils struggling with writing tasks that are too difficult for them. The school should ensure that pupils who have fallen behind get the help they need to develop a secure foundation of writing skills.

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 November 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

Unique reference number	142176
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10346558
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Mills
CEO of the trust	Darren Beardsley
Headteacher	Helen Tomlinson
Website	www.stmaryscps.org
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust.
- The school is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds. The last section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, took place in November 2023.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, members of the governing body, the CEO of the trust and a trust director.

- The inspector spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Leeds.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector considered how the school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- 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 reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Janet Keefe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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