

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Mary's Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7BU

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Primary School is a happy place because relationships between pupils and teachers are warm and nurturing. Pupils are polite and kind. They believe everyone should be treated fairly and with respect. They say, 'We look after each other'. Pupils and staff are equally proud of their school, describing it as being like a family.

Pupils enjoy and are excited by their learning. Right from the start in Nursery, children are delighted by their early achievements, such as managing the zips on their coats so they can go outside to play and learn. Staff have increasingly high expectations of what they can achieve as pupils move through the school. Adults are committed to giving all pupils the best opportunities they can. Pupils enjoy celebrating each other's achievements. This helps inspire them to do their very best.

The school's values help pupils to make the right choices. Behaviour is good. If any bullying does occur, pupils know that staff will resolve it quickly. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of how they can contribute to society positively. Pupils are active members of their community through activities such as litter picking and singing carols at the local superstore.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious and clearly sequenced curriculum. It is aspirational for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In January 2022, leaders expanded the nursery provision to include two-year-old children. Further work is now required to refine the early years curriculum across this widened Nursery age range.

All pupils study the full range of subjects as outlined in the national curriculum. Leaders provide specific provision to ensure pupils can learn well. This has included pre-school mathematics sessions that have helped close any learning gaps and build pupils' confidence following the COVID-19 pandemic. The specific learning needs of pupils with SEND are quickly identified and appropriate support is provided. Personalised support is used effectively to ensure that these pupils are included and have their diverse needs met across the curriculum.

The English and mathematics curriculums are well designed to support pupils achieve well. Learning is clearly connected and regularly applied so that pupils' knowledge is increasingly deep and well linked. In other subjects, such as history, the curriculum has been revised. Here, pupils can talk animatedly about individual historical time periods, such as Ancient Greece. However, pupils do not always build their knowledge over time and apply what they know to new learning. For example, pupils do not confidently understand historical themes such as monarchy and invasion because they cannot connect their knowledge of different time periods.

Leaders ensure that teachers deliver the chosen phonics programme with consistency. Teachers use a range of assessment tools to identify pupils who fall behind or are at the early stages of reading. These pupils benefit from a range of effective interventions. This support helps them to catch up quickly. Pupils love reading and being read to. Daily stories and rhymes in early years captivate children. Staff take care to select books which interest pupils and help them to learn about themselves and the world. They take every opportunity to inspire pupils to read. For example, an online advent calendar features video clips of staff reading so that families can access this at home.

Staff work together as a caring team and have high expectations of behaviour. This begins in the early years. Routines are quickly established. Behaviour across school is mostly positive and supports learning well. Leaders work with unwavering commitment to improve the attendance of all pupils. They have sought external support to help them. Leaders ensure that improving attendance is a continued priority, so that pupils do not miss out on their education.

Pupils' wider development is at the heart of this school. Close links with the church are evident and meaningful. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities available to them. Clubs, visits, leadership opportunities, residentials and outside visitors are just a few examples of the well-considered offer. These activities further enhance pupils' learning outside of the classroom. Many pupils take part in these activities, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Governors are dedicated and highly skilled. They know and understand the school well. They provide effective support for leaders in the drive for continued improvement. Leaders have created a positive culture among the staff team. Staff say that St Mary's is a good and happy place to work. Their workload and well-being are considered by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive safeguarding training to help them identify pupils who may be at risk. Safeguarding checks are thorough and detailed. Leaders tenaciously work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help they need. Leaders recognise the impact of the disruption caused by COVID-19 on pupils' well-being. The caring school team works to support those pupils who need it.

Pupils know and understand how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have ensured that online safety is a high priority. Pupils know to tell an adult if they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully considered the necessary changes to the early years curriculum to meet the needs of the two-year-old children who have recently joined. As a result, the curriculum does not build as well as it might as children move through Nursery. Leaders should refine and define more clearly the sequences of learning across the early years, starting with the curriculum for the very youngest children.
- In some subjects, other than English and mathematics, the curriculum does not always ensure pupils can recall and link what they already know to new knowledge and learning. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should continue to refine the curriculum in the foundation subjects to include opportunities to build this depth of connected knowledge and understanding.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118754
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241746
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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fr Dane Batley-Gladden
Headteacher	Amanda McGarrigle
Website	www.st-marys-swanley.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school expanded the Nursery in January 2022 to include a separate room for two-year-old children.
- The latest Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) was in March 2020.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector met regularly with school leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body and had a

telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Rochester.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read.
- Safeguarding records were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. Inspectors spoke to staff about safeguarding and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys. An inspector spoke to parents at the school gate.
- The inspection team talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspectors met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons, at playtime and around the school.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrea Carter

Ofsted Inspector

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