

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's CofE (A) First School

The Heath, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 7LX

Inspection dates:

26–27 February 2020

Outcome

St Mary's CofE (A) First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this school. Leaders are passionate and determined that pupils receive the best learning experiences. They have worked hard to improve the quality of education across the school. Pupils are taught to be curious and resilient learners. They have positive attitudes to learning and show pride in their work. A variety of extra-curricular opportunities help to enrich pupils' learning. All pupils can choose to take part in activities such as dance, cookery, sport, craft and yoga.

Pupils say St Mary's is a happy place to be. They are safe in school. Pupils behave well in lessons. Bullying is very rare. Pupils say, if it happens, staff deal with it quickly. A pupil said, 'We are taught to be like the Good Samaritan, we learn how to be kind to each other.'

Parents are extremely positive about the school. One parent commented: 'My child is supported to achieve a varied education. The way the staff engage with what's going on in the wider community gives my child a strong sense of her role in the world.' This view is shared by many parents.

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

Leaders have worked hard to bring about improvements. They have a clear understanding of what they need to do next. Their continued focus on mathematics and reading ensures that pupils are achieving well in these subjects. This is reflected in the work teachers and pupils are doing in the classroom.

Pupils enjoy reading and talk confidently about their favourite books. They enjoy the half-termly focus on different authors. Pupils say that this is inspiring them to read different authors and genres. Teachers read regularly to pupils. There is a range of well-selected reading materials that are shared with pupils. These include stories, poetry, non-fiction and newspapers. Pupils value story time.

From the very start, children in Reception develop their reading skills well. They are well supported by adults to make good progress in reading. Adults use every spare minute to target gaps in children's phonic knowledge. This includes when learning outside. Because of this, children begin to read well.

The work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is usually well planned. They have access to challenging texts and mathematics work. However, some teachers do not challenge pupils in phonics to ensure that they learn sounds quickly enough. This is because teachers spend too much time practising sounds, rather than applying them.

Leaders have created a strong curriculum in mathematics. There is a clear vision for mathematics that is shared by all staff and pupils. The staff see the changes as overwhelmingly positive. This is also reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to mathematics. For example, pupils develop secure skills, knowledge and understanding of number facts. Learning builds on what pupils have learned in the past. Teachers regularly revisit areas that the pupils may not have come across recently. Through highly effective support, all pupils are successful mathematicians. Pupils of all ages can talk about the different resources that they use to help and support them in lessons.

All subjects have clear plans, which meet the demands of the national curriculum. Teachers plan topics in a logical order. Subject leaders have developed their expertise by working together. For example, the history leader has put effective plans in place. Foundation subject leads now need to ensure that all staff are consistently implementing the changes.

There is a Nursery and Reception class in the early years. The indoor and outdoor environments are safe and stimulating. Children are well looked after because staff are well trained and caring. Staff plan activities to help children develop their speaking and social skills. Children show high levels of concentration and involvement in their chosen activities. For example, children can work together to design and build a house effectively for 'The Three Little Pigs' that had a door that would not fall down. Children get a firm foundation in reading and mathematics. They achieve very well in the different areas of learning. Staff encourage parents to join in their children's education.

Pupils learn about other religions and cultures. They understand the need for tolerance and kindness. They vote to choose pupils who will take up leadership roles. This helps pupils to understand the concept of democracy.

Governors are very well informed. They use this information to make informed decisions about the school and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. There are thorough procedures in place, so that concerns are dealt with quickly. All adults, including governors, are well trained,

including in areas such as county lines and the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders make timely referrals to the local authority. They seek early help when concerns about pupils' safety arise.

Leaders ensure that there are systems in place for checking and monitoring attendance. As a result, the number of pupils who are regularly off school is declining and overall attendance is improving.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have brought about improvement in many subjects. However, they have not made sure that curriculum plans for foundation subjects are being implemented in all year groups, particularly in key stage 1. As a result, pupils' learning and achievement vary. Leaders need to check more carefully that their plans are being implemented effectively by all staff.
- Staff are well trained to teach phonics and early reading. Most pupils develop the skills they need to decode text and begin to read with confidence. However, some pupils who find reading difficult are not given work that is challenging enough. Consequently, they are not learning new phonic skills quickly enough. Teachers should ensure that the work set meets pupils' needs by building consistently on what pupils are able to do, and therefore challenge them further.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 9–10 June 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	124344
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10122589
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Sherwin
Headteacher	Susan Wade
Website	www.st-marys-uttoxeter.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A section 48 inspection to evaluate the distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mary's First School as a Church of England school took place in October 2019.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has added a Nursery.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club. The provision is managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, deep dives were completed in: reading, mathematics and history. I visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, examined curriculum plans and talked with pupils and staff about the way these subjects are delivered. I also spoke with pupils, staff and parents about school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, special educational needs coordinator and the subject leaders for reading, mathematics and history.
- I met with governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority and the Diocese of Lichfield.

- The checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment were scrutinised. I evaluated safeguarding documents, and talked to parents, staff and pupils.
- Thirty-nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were considered.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons, in the playground, in the dining room and while they were moving around the school was observed.
- I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation and development plan, the headteacher's reports and external reports.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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