

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's CofE (A) First School

The Heath, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 7LX

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Inspection dates:

7 and 8 May 2025

## Outcome

St Mary's CofE (A) First 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 warm and welcoming school. The two values of 'love' and 'respect' permeate every aspect of its work. The relationships that pupils have with each other and with staff are based on these values. Pupils know that staff care for them and will look after them. This helps them feel safe in school. Pupils understand the school rules and work hard to follow them at all times. They are well-mannered and polite. Pupils show genuine care for each other.

Pupils are proud of their school, and rightly so. They attend regularly, arriving happily each morning to enjoy the many opportunities and experiences the school provides for them. They relish the opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom and get to experience a wealth of outdoor learning opportunities when they visit 'The Croft on the Heath'. Their experiences are further enhanced by the many clubs, trips and visits they can take part in.

The school is determined to ensure that pupils should reach their full potential. It supports them to achieve well academically. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum has been designed with this in mind. The school's new approaches to implementing the curriculum are making these aspirations a reality for many.

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

The school puts reading at the heart of the curriculum. It wants pupils to foster a love of reading that will stay with them long after they leave. From the early years, children regularly hear and read quality texts. Pupils start to learn to read as soon as they start school. The school provides additional support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind in phonics. However, sometimes, the support this small number of pupils receive is not as

effective as it could be in identifying the reasons for gaps or what those gaps are. This means that these pupils do not have their precise learning needs met through subsequent support, and they do not catch up as rapidly as they might. The school has recently taken a new approach to the teaching of writing. This is having a positive impact across all curriculum areas. Pupils write well for their age.

The school thinks intelligently about how pupils can demonstrate their understanding in lessons. Pupils have the confidence to talk about what they know, think and understand. This leads to lively yet respectful discussions, with pupils challenging and building on each other's responses in a highly effective way. Skilled teachers impart knowledge clearly, in a way that supports pupils' understanding. Pupils make links across topics and subjects coherently and thoughtfully.

Children get off to a great start in the early years. They settle quickly in a stimulating environment. The strong relationships evident elsewhere in school start in earnest in this setting. Pupils with SEND have their needs accurately identified. Staff support them well because they understand their needs. The extra help they receive helps them to access the same curriculum as their peers when possible.

The school recognises the importance of pupils attending school regularly. They are proud that very few pupils regularly miss school. Pupils behave well around school and on the playground. Older pupils take on the responsibility of supporting younger pupils. The majority of pupils are engaged in lessons because teachers make them interesting. However, occasionally, pupils can become distracted. This is not always addressed and can affect the learning of others.

There is a well-designed and age-appropriate personal, social and health education programme. Staff teach pupils about respecting other people's faiths, cultures and ways of life. Kindness is modelled for them, and they routinely emulate this. They learn about democracy through being voted into positions of responsibility. Pupils enjoy learning about healthy eating. They grow, harvest and cook various fruits and vegetables from the school allotment. The many theme weeks, visits and visitors help bring learning to life and help to create long-lasting memories. Pupils enjoy leading clubs at lunchtime, including the outside library, further developing the sense of pride and responsibility they feel in school.

The school is very well led. It puts the needs and interests of pupils at the heart of every decision made. All staff work with the same ambition and desire to ensure pupils' best interests drive their work. Staff feel valued because they are. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the care and guidance their children receive. They value the open relationships they can have with staff, saying that no concern is ever too small. Governors are skilled and dedicated professionals who complement the work of the highly effective leaders in school. Pupils are well prepared when the time comes to leave their much-loved first school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not consistently use assessment well enough in phonics. As a result, some pupils cannot decode or read fluently, and strategies to support them are not as effective as they could be. The school should ensure that assessments enable staff to identify gaps in knowledge, followed by effective teaching strategies that support them to catch up with their peers.
- There are some incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons that are not consistently picked up by adults. This leads to some pupils remaining off task and not completing their work. The school should ensure that adults consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to keep pupils consistently engaged with their learning.

## 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 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124344
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10378241
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Reverend Charles Dale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Moulton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marys-uttoxeter.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-marys-uttoxeter.staffs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This Church of England school is in the Diocese of Lichfield. The last section 48 inspection took place in October 2019. Its next inspection will be in the academic year 2026/27.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The headteacher has been appointed to the role since the previous inspection.

## 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The inspector spoke with six governors, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils 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 a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views.

### **Inspection team**

Keri Baylis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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