

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Marnhull

Old Mill Lane, Marnhull, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 1JX

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this inclusive school. They live out the school's deep-rooted values of respect, compassion, forgiveness, and tolerance. They say this is a place where 'we make lots of friends and everyone is accepting.'

Leaders thoughtfully use pupils' experiences and interests to provide an effective curriculum. They use the features of the local area to make learning meaningful. As a result, pupils become interested and confident learners who achieve well.

Parents rightly say that their children are safe and well cared for. They too feel supported by staff, who regularly communicate about their children and tell them how they can help with learning at home.

Pupils say that although there has been some bullying in the past, this is not an issue now. They know that leaders watch this closely and provide support for pupils who fall out. Pupils recognise that everyone makes mistakes and that everyone holds different opinions and viewpoints. They place high importance on saying sorry and forgiving others when they get it wrong, recognising that 'guilt isn't nice'.

Leaders provide opportunities that help pupils to develop a range of interests and a sense of responsibility. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about clubs that they attend, such as sports, drama and eco club. They help others in need by regularly fundraising for charity.

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

Leaders have improved the curriculum so that it is broad and ambitious. They provide pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with the knowledge that they need to succeed.

Teachers ensure that learning is well structured to meet the individual needs of pupils. They provide learning that makes pupils think deeply. This develops pupils' understanding well over time. For example, in Year 2 history, pupils considered the impact of change between the stone age and the iron age. They used their prior knowledge to explain that 'there was greater variation in the food eaten because the tools they used were more advanced'.

The focus on improving language has strengthened pupils' use of vocabulary. Staff in the pre-school model language effectively. This helps children learn to express themselves appropriately. As pupils move through key stage 1, teachers use resources, such as sentence stems, to further develop their knowledge. As a result, pupils gain a secure understanding of language features. However, they do not consistently reflect this in their work across the curriculum. For example, pupils do not accurately apply their knowledge of spelling and punctuation.

In the early years, children get off to a good start. Staff are knowledgeable about childhood development. They choose learning activities carefully, so children build their knowledge and independence. Leaders have strengthened the teaching of early mathematics. There are now more opportunities for children to receive explicit teaching, so they are able to recognise numbers and count at an earlier stage.

Reading is central to learning at St Mary's. High-quality teaching from the start helps pupils gain the knowledge they need to read well. They read books with confidence and accuracy. Teachers regularly check to ensure that pupils know the sounds that make words. They provide extra support to help pupils at risk of falling behind to catch up quickly. Pupils enjoy reading stories that develop their knowledge of the wider world. For example, children in Reception Year used the story of 'Town Mouse and Country Mouse' to develop their understanding of urban and rural areas.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. They provide training for staff to ensure that they are skilled and knowledgeable about a range of SEND. Teachers adapt learning to enable pupils to access the full curriculum. They provide effective support for pupils with social and emotional difficulties. This helps these pupils to attend school more regularly and progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils behave well. Where low-level disruptions occur, staff give pupils clear instructions to refocus them on learning.

Leaders have designed an effective personal development curriculum. Pupils grow to be reflective, caring and accepting of all. They develop a deep understanding of faith and celebrate religious and cultural differences. Leaders make use of opportunities to help pupils understand fundamental British values, such as discussing national elections. However, these values are not taught systematically through the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of these.

Staff are proud of their school. They say that leaders and governors support them to manage their workload and well-being. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They monitor leaders' work, challenging and supporting them to bring about improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors and leaders have created a culture where pupils are and feel safe. They undertake the checks to make sure staff and visitors are suitable to be with children. They provide training for staff to inform them of safeguarding risks.

Staff are alert that 'it could happen here'. They know pupils well and observe any changes in their behaviour, identifying those who may need any additional help. They record and report concerns to leaders who seek advice from external safeguarding partners when needed.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider world. They stick to the age rating of gaming apps to make sure they are suitable and say that 'sharing isn't caring' if you give out personal details on social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not accurately or consistently apply their knowledge of spelling and punctuation. As a result, pupils' written work across the curriculum does not reflect their understanding of these features. Leaders need to ensure that teachers raise their expectations of pupils' writing across all subjects so that all pupils apply what they know consistently and accurately across the curriculum.
- The curriculum for personal development does not systematically teach pupils about the fundamental British values. Consequently, pupils do not develop a sufficient understanding of these. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is explicitly and systematically designed to teach fundamental British values so that it matches pupils' deeper understanding of faith and belief and that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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	140776
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10227966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mrs Ruth O'Donovan
Headteacher	Sharon Betts
Website	www.stmarymarnhull.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's Catholic Primary School is part of Plymouth CAST trust.
- This is a church school in the Diocese of Plymouth. The school received its section 48 inspection under the Education Act for schools of a religious character in May 2017, when this aspect of the school's work was graded outstanding.
- The school uses no 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, a group of staff, parents, representatives from the multi-academy trust and members of the local governing body.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about, and reviewed samples of, work in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the documentation around safeguarding, including the safeguarding checks made on staff. They talked to governors, staff and pupils about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors visited the breakfast club and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to see how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted online survey, Ofsted Parent View, responses to the staff survey and responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Steph Matthews, lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Jo Randall

Ofsted Inspector

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