

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Rickmansworth

Stockers Farm Road, St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 1NY

Inspection dates

28–29 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is improving rapidly because the new dedicated headteacher and middle leaders, alongside governors, are determined to provide the best possible education for all pupils.
- The school has a caring inclusive ethos, where pupils are looked after well. Parents and carers, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school.
- An exciting, aspirational curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education and for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy learning and work hard at school. Behaviour is good in lessons, at playtime and while moving about the school. Pupils show respect towards and tolerance of each other and adults.
- The implementation of new strategies is improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, current pupils are making good and better progress from their September starting points.
- The early years curriculum and teaching are improving quickly. Children work well together in a stimulating learning environment. They make good progress from their various starting points.
- Teachers show strong subject knowledge and ask effective questions that develop pupils' thinking, knowledge and skills across the curriculum.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their improvement plans are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Strong practices are in place to keep pupils safe and to address any concerns quickly.
- Staff use their knowledge of current pupils to plan effective tasks. Sufficient challenge and appropriate support, where required, enable all groups of pupils to make good progress during their learning activities.
- The new, talented middle leadership team is beginning to drive school development but has not yet had time to show sustained impact on teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers continue to implement the new teaching strategies effectively so that all groups of pupils make good or better progress across the curriculum over time.
- Rigorous evaluations of new teaching and learning strategies are undertaken by middle leaders to ensure sustained improvements in pupils' outcomes, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher, leaders and governors work collaboratively to improve all aspects of the school. The school's vision of 'Aspire, Nurture, Flourish' is at the heart of all school development.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas where development is needed. The school's improvement plans identify appropriate actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes. Staff value the high-quality training provided. They are proud to work in the school. As a result, morale is high. There is good capacity for further improvement.
- The talented, new middle leadership team, which has only been in place for two terms, is developing teachers' and additional adults' skills well. These leaders are very knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility and provide effective role models. Their actions, including implementing new strategies in teaching and learning, are already improving the progress pupils make across the curriculum this school year. However, the work of the middle leaders has not yet been fully evaluated to show sustained impact on teaching, learning and assessment over time.
- Leaders ensure that assessment is accurate by working with the local authority and other schools. They know how well current pupils are performing. They identify any groups or individuals who are underachieving so that appropriate support can be put in place quickly. They are closing any gaps identified between groups of pupils. No one group or subject is significantly disadvantaged in progress across the school. Any differences are related to the characteristics of specific year groups.
- The school's curriculum is aspirational and exciting for all pupils. It builds up their skills through an effective sequence of learning. This deepens pupils' thinking and understanding, including those who are most able. Inspectors observed Year 6 pupils discussing and recording thoughtfully how charities support children who are refugees. Pupils enjoy their interesting topics, which include 'I'm an explorer, get me out of here!' and 'What makes Britain great'. Inspection evidence and work on display indicate that pupils have various opportunities to develop their skills in sport, art and music. For example, an inspector observed Year 2 pupils skilfully and confidently composing and performing sequences of sounds they made with percussion instruments.
- Leaders, governors and staff promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They ensure that pupils are well equipped with an understanding of fundamental British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The new equality council made up of governors, staff and pupils supports 'fairness in school'. Pupils stated, 'Everyone is equal and special, and we all have the same rights.'
- Leaders and governors have drawn on external advice to review how they use the pupil premium funding. As a result, training for governors and staff, alongside new teaching and learning strategies, has ensured that disadvantaged pupils make good or better progress, diminishing any differences between their attainment and that of other pupils.

- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding well to increase pupils' participation in a wide variety of sports clubs and competitions. Skilled sports professionals help teachers to develop their skills further so that pupils receive high-quality PE. The school has recently achieved a 'Gold Sports Award'.
- The new leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is developing this aspect effectively. New robust systems are in place to identify pupils with SEND, and the progress they make is checked carefully. Most of these pupils are making good progress, in some cases from very low starting points, because they receive support that is appropriate to their needs.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and those who spoke informally with inspectors were positive about the work of the school. The majority would recommend the school to others. Parents emphasised the 'lovely, nurturing environment' and 'the family, community feel of the school'. Many agreed that 'children are very happy, I feel lucky that they are at St Mary's'.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve further. They are dedicated to school development. Governors support the headteacher's drive for improvements to ensure that all pupils receive a good education.
- Governors have a clear strategic overview. They regularly check the impact of the actions of the school improvement plan to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes are being maintained and improved upon.
- Governors value good-quality training to improve their skills. The pupil premium review and the recent training around national assessments have enabled them to challenge leaders more rigorously about the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The governing body understands its responsibilities with regard to the safeguarding of pupils within the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors, leaders and all staff are committed to ensuring that robust systems and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe within school. Records are meticulously kept, and any issues are recorded, routinely monitored and reviewed. Inspection evidence shows that any concerns are followed up swiftly.
- All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training, including the prevention of extremism and radicalisation and the exploitation of children regarding 'county lines'.
- The school's single central record of employment checks meets legal requirements. All adults have undergone the required checks to determine their suitability to work with children.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum, including assemblies, supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and in the community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is improving. High-quality displays and work in pupils' books indicate that teachers give pupils many opportunities to practise their skills and apply them effectively across an exciting curriculum.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and accurate assessment information to plan well-structured sequences of learning that build on what pupils know and can do. Teachers' questioning is effective in checking pupils' understanding and extending their thinking. This ensures that all pupils, including the most able, are sufficiently challenged.
- The new teaching strategies across the curriculum give pupils clear routines. They understand the high expectations placed upon them. They act on teachers' helpful advice as they are keen to improve their learning. Misconceptions are corrected regularly. Pupils routinely edit their work to improve their learning.
- Teachers and pupils share strong relationships that lead to pupils' willingness to work hard. Pupils enjoy their lessons and attempt difficult tasks enthusiastically. They are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. During independent learning, adults give effective feedback to support pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants are skilled in supporting pupils to either catch up or extend their learning further. They work closely with the teacher to help pupils of all abilities make the best possible progress, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- In the early years and key stage 1, the quality of teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to routinely practise their sounds. Pupils then apply their phonological knowledge to read and spell new words. Reading books in key stage 1 support pupils' phonics development well.
- Pupils read widely and enjoy an extensive range of reading material. High-quality texts support their learning well. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 who read to inspectors read books that were appropriate to their chronological age and interest with confidence and understanding. Teachers are focusing appropriately on pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar and comprehension skills to ensure that they develop their reading skills effectively.
- The new teaching strategies in mathematics are increasing pupils' understanding so that they can apply their skills and knowledge in other subjects effectively, especially in science. Appropriate resources and different ways of recording their work are enabling pupils of all abilities to explain their thinking, with the correct mathematical vocabulary. This is improving their fluency and problem-solving skills.
- Teachers implement the school's curriculum effectively, which is interesting to all pupils. A set of key skills allows pupils to become 'subject masters', such as historians,

scientists and global citizens. This approach is improving pupils' standard of work and presentation in subjects other than English and mathematics.

- Relevant links between English and other subjects provide pupils with many opportunities to write at length, developing their writing skills and subject knowledge simultaneously. Teachers model writing techniques to a high standard when required. Pupils are making good progress in their writing skills across the school.
- The new teaching strategies are improving current pupils' learning and the progress they make across the curriculum. However, these are in the early stages of implementation. Not enough time has passed for them to be fully evaluated or to have had a sustained impact on the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- In lessons, pupils show interest in their learning and engage enthusiastically in their tasks. They take pride in their work. One child stated, 'I like to be challenged so I can get better and improve', and others agreed with this statement.
- The curriculum develops thoughtful and respectful pupils who work and play well together. They listen to each other while sharing their ideas.
- Pupils take responsibility as members of the eco council, the ethos group and the new equality council.
- Pupils understand the meaning of bullying and, with their parents, say that bullying is uncommon. However, if it happens, they are confident that it will be dealt with quickly and appropriately. Pupils also understand the dangers when using the internet.
- Teachers ensure that pupils know how to stay physically and emotionally healthy. The 'Question Time' club for the most able pupils debated 'the effect of food on sport' at a high level during the inspection.
- Staff know pupils well and meet their individual needs appropriately through effective care, nurture and support. Parents value the support that staff provide for their children.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents and staff agree that this is the case.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They apply the new behaviour system consistently across the school. This is improving pupils' behaviour. The school's documentation shows that there are now fewer behavioural incidents. Staff engage pupils well in their learning during lessons so that learning is rarely interrupted.

- Pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered. They play together happily at breaktimes and behave appropriately in the dining hall. They walk around school calmly and sensibly.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance for current pupils is broadly in line with the national average. Staff work effectively with parents to promote good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016 and 2017, the progress pupils made from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. However, there was a sharp decline in 2018 in all three subjects. Leaders and governors analysed this dip carefully and have ensured that assessments are more accurate so that progress over time is more reliable.
- Work in pupils' books and in displays shows that all year groups are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Years 5 and 6. This evidence is supported by school assessment information and improvements in teaching and learning.
- Over time, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected standard and at greater depth or the higher standard has been broadly in line with the national average. The school's assessment system and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils' attainment in 2019 is likely to be similar to that of previous years in both key stages.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average over time. The teaching of phonics is improving across the early years and key stage 1 to sustain and improve upon the previous results. Pupils have a greater understanding of how to use their phonological knowledge to support reading and writing.
- There are few disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND in each year group. Currently, these pupils as a whole school group are making good progress from their various September starting points, aided by effective support and challenge.
- The most able pupils are challenged sufficiently across the school. The new teaching and learning strategies and thought-provoking questioning are developing pupils' deeper understanding, knowledge and skills effectively.
- Current Year 6 pupils are confident learners who can explain their learning well. They are being prepared well for secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The new early years leader has improved the inside and outside learning areas to meet the needs of both Nursery and Reception children. Leadership and the quality of teaching are good.
- Strong assessment systems are in place and information is checked carefully to ensure that children make good progress from their starting points. Adults know the children

well and work closely together to ensure that the children make the progress that they should.

- Most children enter the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development, the expected standard at the end of the Reception Year, is broadly in line with the national average.
- The early years leader has high expectations for children to achieve well in all areas of learning. The teaching of phonics is effective for the Nursery and Reception children, with a clear focus on the correct pronunciation and recognition of letters and sounds. Reception children break down words and blend sounds well to support their reading and spelling.
- The early years team makes regular, accurate assessments and carefully plans the next learning opportunities for all children so that they achieve well. Any gaps between groups of learners are identified and closed quickly. Children's learning journals and their work recorded on electronic devices provide evidence of this.
- Adults in the early years have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which is good. The children follow class routines well and engage in activities purposefully and with enthusiasm. Adults closely observe children's learning and skilfully ask questions to extend children's thinking and language skills.
- Planned activities interest and encourage imaginative learning for boys and girls. Children enjoyed their activities based around the theme of pirates. They shared good-quality books about pirates and weighed jewellery treasure to enhance their reading and mathematical skills. While outside, children heartily sang pirate songs and used a telescope to spy land in the large pirate ship that they had carefully and safely made from crates and planks.
- The children move to and from activities sensibly. Many show sustained interest in their tasks. As a result, the Reception children are confident and resilient learners who are well prepared for key stage 1.
- The early years leader engages effectively with parents, including through 'stay and play' opportunities. Parents and children enjoy sharing reading books at school.
- Nursery and Reception children work and play in a stimulating, safe learning environment. All safeguarding and welfare requirements are effective.

School details

Unique reference number	117447
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053043

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Carruthers
Headteacher	Emma Edwards
Telephone number	01923 776 529
Website	www.stmarys698.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@stmarys698.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 February 2018

Information about this school

- There have been many changes in leaders and teachers in recent years. The headteacher was appointed in September 2017 and the new middle leadership team from September 2018.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- Children in the early years attend full-time in the Reception Year and full-time or part-time in the Nursery Year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is well below the national average.

- The school has a Church of England designation. The last section 48 inspection of religious education was in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, leaders, governors and an external consultant.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including: teachers' planning; the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; information on pupils' attainment and progress; records of behaviour and safety; minutes of governing body meetings; and safeguarding documents.
- A discussion was held with a group of pupils, and informal conversations with pupils took place during lessons and at breaktimes. The inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors considered 56 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 30 free-text comments. Views of parents were informally sought at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors also took account of the views of 22 staff who responded to their online survey.

Inspection team

Julie Harrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Joseph Figg

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