

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Aston-le-Walls

Main Street, Aston-le-Walls, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 6UF

Inspection date:

4 May 2023

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Aston-le-Walls continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is a warm and welcoming school. As one parent typically stated: 'It's like a little family.' Leaders ensure the school's 'golden threads; resilience, independence, well-being, culture, the arts, initiative, possibilities, oracy, reflection' weave throughout the curriculum. They are also at the heart of the school's approach to ensuring pupils behave well. Pupils get on with each other. Leaders encourage them to take responsibility for themselves and develop resilience. As one pupil said they can resolve issues themselves if they occur because they are 'mature' for their age.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve well, including those pupils with a special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff work hard to get to know the pupils and support them. Staff and pupils build strong relationships. Pupils know there is someone they can go to if they are worried.

Pupils learn to be respectful and tolerant of difference. Older pupils enjoy the opportunity to help younger pupils. In the 'drop everything and read' session on Monday afternoons, Year 6 pupils relish the chance to read with the younger pupils. Pupils also work well together in class and 'buddy' with each other to develop their understanding.

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

Leaders have established an ambitious curriculum. Most subject leaders have a clear vision of what pupils will achieve in their subjects. This is further enhanced, for example, in science, with science weeks, practical sessions and interesting visitors. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Staff make sure pupils receive support quickly if they begin to struggle. Teachers present information well. They ensure that pupils focus and engage in their learning. Pupils state their learning is challenging. For example, in mathematics, the 'multiple marathon' is 'good but it's hard'. Pupils enjoy their lessons. In a few subjects, subject leaders are not aware of how effectively their subject is being implemented. 'Entry and exit tickets' enable teachers to find out what pupils already know and what they

remember at the end of each term. However, in a few subjects, these systems to check what pupils know and remember are not yet well established.

Leaders place a high priority on ensuring all pupils learn to read as soon as they start school. Carefully chosen books match the pupils' knowledge of phonics and helps them to read fluently. Staff are swift to spot when pupils fall behind and provide the necessary support to catch up. Leaders provide books to enhance other subjects in the curriculum. Pupils enjoy the dedicated reading time each day. The recent introduction of the 'reading passport' motivates pupils to read frequently. Teachers make sure pupils experience a wide range of books, including poetry.

Children in the early years foundation stage settle well. There is a calm feel to the department. Well planned activities develop independence and adults work effectively together to support children's learning. Clear milestones ensure the staff are aware of what the children must achieve, and by when.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. The needs of pupils with SEND are quickly identified. Clear targets ensure these pupils receive the support they need. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive. Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND to achieve. Carefully constructed activities enable these pupils to achieve alongside their peers.

Pupils behave well. This is because the behaviour policy is consistently applied. Pupils are respectful of each other. They get on well together and play calmly at playtimes. Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils interact well with each other in class and are polite moving around the school. One pupil typically stated: 'The teachers and the pupils are caring, kind and if we get upset, they help you.'

Pupils learn to be responsible citizens. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The school parliament make decisions to improve the school, such as obtaining more play equipment and books for lessons. The 'eco-council' explore ways to improve the environment and share their work through a termly newspaper. There are a wide range of activities, and clubs, that both support the curriculum and enrich pupils' experiences beyond it.

Staff state their well-being is a priority for leaders. Leaders ensure that teachers get the time they need to undertake any leadership responsibilities. A clear yearly timetable makes sure that workload does not build unnecessarily.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training. They identify and report any concerns about pupils who may be at risk of potential harm. Staff share concerns using rigorous systems. These are regularly monitored. Pupils and families receive the support they need. When agencies are slow to respond to pupils' needs leaders tenaciously pursue support. Regular surveys identify the needs of pupils and the community. Leaders direct additional training and

support accordingly. Leaders make use of emergency services visits to enhance pupils understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say they feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe when learning online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Systems to check what pupils know and remember are not yet well established. As a consequence, in a few subjects some pupils do not remember long term what they have learned. Leaders should ensure that there is a consistent approach, with consideration for teacher workload, to ensuring teachers check what pupils know and remember over time and make appropriate adaptations to teaching.
- In a few subjects, some subject leaders are not aware of how effectively their subject is being implemented. There are inconsistencies in delivery of these subjects and the curriculum is not always implemented as leaders intend it to be. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders check on the implementation and impact of their subject in lessons.

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/outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in January 2014.

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	122040
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10286995
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rebecca Iley
Headteacher	Laura Concannon
Website	www.stmarysrc-astonlewalls.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in May 2019. This was carried out by the Catholic Diocese of Northampton.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: reading, mathematics and science. To do this, they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils. They also looked at curriculum documentation for history and art and design.

- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The lead inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted's free-text service for parents, Ofsted Parent View survey, Ofsted's staff survey and pupil survey. An inspector spoke informally to parents outside the school.
- Records of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were scrutinised. This included the school's single central record. Inspectors also conducted meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson

Ofsted Inspector

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