

# Inspection of a good school: St Marys Catholic Primary School

Chapel Green, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2LB

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Inspection dates:

1 and 2 February 2022

## Outcome

St Marys Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know the importance of the school ethos: pray, learn, love, enjoy. It reflects their experience of school. They say that everyone is kind and helps each other. Expectations are high. Pupils strive to meet them. In classes and around school pupils behave well and work hard. They follow instructions and listen to their teachers and each other. Play times are relaxed and social occasions. Everyone gets along. Pupils are confident that staff help resolve any problems. This means that issues such as bullying are extremely rare and quickly dealt with.

Pupils are positive about school. They value the extensive school grounds and the school swimming pool. They appreciate the efforts of staff to make school fun, such as ensuring they can listen to music at lunchtime. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to make contributions to school life. They relish the opportunities they get to develop their personal skills by taking on roles of responsibility such as working in the library or being a buddy for younger pupils. Pupils feel happy, safe and valued.

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

Since their appointment in 2021, senior leaders have taken decisive and appropriate action to secure school improvement. Their actions have returned the school to a secure footing after a period of leadership and staffing upheaval. Leaders and governors have worked closely with the local authority and diocese. They have harnessed their support in driving the school forward. Staff are positive about the support that they have had to help develop their roles.

Leaders have ensured that clear systems are in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are well supported to access the curriculum and experience success. Close working with parents and a range of training for staff have helped ensure that pupils with SEND participate fully in school life. The English and mathematics curriculums have been revised and strengthened. Staff have been well trained in the new approaches. Pupils quickly learn to read well. Right from the

start of Reception, children regularly learn phonics and apply their skills using books that help them to be successful. Any pupils that fall behind are quickly identified and given the help they need to catch up.

Pupils deepen their reading fluency and understanding well as they move into key stage 2. The school's carefully curated selection of 'doorway books' ensures that pupils experience a wide range of genres and authors. This supports them well in developing a love of reading.

The mathematics curriculum is effective. In Reception, children are encouraged to explain their thinking about numbers and patterns. As they move through the school pupils recall and apply their number facts well. They relish the regular opportunities to apply them, for example by solving the birthdays challenges in assemblies. Pupils are confident when using a range of calculation methods. They can choose the best ones to solve a range of problems. Careful and regular assessment is helping to identify any gaps in knowledge, including those due to the pandemic. Pupils who need additional support, including those with SEND, are given the help they need to experience success.

The revision of the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics, while underway, has not yet been completed. Pupils enjoy the wider curriculum. They are attentive and behave well, which helps them to learn. Pupils remember some of the exciting experiences such as experiments with eggs or making vehicles. However, in some subjects, these experiences are not yet connected by a clear enough framework to set out what and when pupils will learn new content. Pupils are not consistently learning or remembering knowledge as well in the wider curriculum as they do in English and mathematics.

Pupils benefit from a carefully considered approach to personal development. They learn about themselves and others. Pupils enjoy the regular and close affiliations with the church. They are interested in the views and beliefs of a range of religions. Pupils value the chance to learn about and support a range of charities. They benefit from opportunities to lead assemblies to share information, or arrange special days such as pyjama days to raise funds.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular training ensures that all staff know how to identify the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders regularly review records to help them spot any emerging patterns. They act swiftly to source relevant external support to help vulnerable pupils and their families. All appropriate checks are carefully completed to ensure the suitability of staff.

The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to seek help if they have any worries. Pupils are confident that staff will listen and respond to any concerns.

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

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

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects in the wider curriculum. This means that pupils are not consistently learning and remembering as well in some subjects as they do in English and mathematics. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about, and are making any necessary amendments in response to the pandemic. Leaders should continue to revise the foundation curriculum, ensuring that they identify clearly what pupils should learn and remember and the order in which they will learn new knowledge. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

## 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2012.

## 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.

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114566
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10207117
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	218
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Lorna Buckwell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Scanlon
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarysrc.e-sussex.sch.uk">www.stmarysrc.e-sussex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	31 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Mary's Primary School is a Catholic voluntary aided school. It is part of the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The last denominational Catholic school inspection was carried out in October 2021.
- Following a period of interim leadership, the current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January and April 2021 respectively.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with senior leaders. Meetings were also held with other school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair

of governors. The inspector also held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and design technology. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to some pupils reading.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke with staff about their safeguarding training and spoke with pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- The inspector met with staff to gather their views about the school, including discussions about workload and well-being. The inspector completed a tour of the school with pupils and spoke to them during lessons and at other times of the school day.

### **Inspection team**

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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