

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's RC Primary School

Mill Street, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 2TH

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2023

Outcome

St Mary's RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's RC Primary School is a school where pupils are happy to attend. Pupils are keen to share how kind and caring staff are. Pupils know who they can speak to if they have a worry and have absolute confidence that it would be sorted out.

Staff set high expectations for children from the early years. Pupils behave well during lessons and playtime. On the odd occasion that bullying happens, pupils know that staff deal with it quickly and make sure that it stops.

Leaders have set an ambitious vision for what they want pupils to achieve. They show drive and determination to raise aspirations for all pupils. Pupils are proud of their successes, and they enjoy rewards they can earn. They appreciate the range of opportunities provided to broaden their experience and understanding of the world around them. There are many leadership roles that pupils readily apply for, such as school councillor and science ambassador.

Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, some pupils do not always achieve equally well in some of the other subjects.

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

Governors and trustees are very supportive of the work of the school. They ask challenging questions of leaders to hold them to account fully. Staff are proud to work at this school. They say that leaders are considerate of their well-being and make sure that their workload is manageable.

Leaders have carefully considered and planned the important knowledge and skills that they expect pupils to learn and by when. They have made sure that the vast majority of staff have the necessary expertise to teach the curriculum. As a result, most staff teach the curriculum as it is intended and check that pupils understand important concepts before moving on to new learning. A small number of staff do not teach the whole

curriculum as leaders expect. This leads to some children not remembering key knowledge that they have been taught, and this is not always addressed appropriately.

Leaders are fully committed to inclusion, and this sits at the heart of the school. They follow the advice of external agencies and make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the support that they need early on. Staff adjust the curriculum, when necessary, to make sure that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Reading is prioritised. A new phonics programme has been introduced this year. Pupils begin to learn to read in pre-school. This builds through Reception and children develop their phonic knowledge. Leaders have made sure that staff have developed the necessary expertise to teach reading well. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that match to the sounds they have learned. This helps to develop pupils' reading fluency and accuracy. Staff check pupils' learning and identify any pupils who need to catch up. Pupils get swift and appropriate support from staff to help them to do so.

There is a caring and nurturing ethos in early years. Children are happy and secure. They are always busy and work with purpose. They behave well and have strong relationships with staff. Children enjoy listening to stories and joining in with songs and rhymes. Staff successfully develop children's independence. The curriculum in early years has been developed relatively recently. However, important knowledge, skills and vocabulary do not always build in a clear sequence towards the end points by the end of Reception year. Consequently, in some areas of learning, children do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders make sure that pupils learn about different faiths other than their own. Pupils understand that there are many different faiths and beliefs, and are respectful of this. They are taught about fundamental British values and have a good understanding of concepts such as democracy.

There are a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to take part in that are fully inclusive. Pupils attend clubs such as choir, computer coding, forest school and a range of sports. They enjoy taking part in sports competitions. Pupils enjoy performing in an annual musical concert at Birmingham Symphony Hall.

Pupils value extending their learning through visits and a residential trip in Year 6. Visits are carefully planned by subject leaders to consolidate and extend learning within the curriculum. These include visits to a museum and a local safari park.

Pupils make a positive difference in their school, local community and beyond. They take this work seriously and organise many different opportunities to help those in need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff receive appropriate training so that they can recognise signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. There are rigorous systems for reporting concerns that all staff know, understand and use when needed. Leaders act quickly to escalate

concerns and follow this up with external agencies when necessary. They work closely with families to make sure that pupils are safe.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe online through the curriculum. They also learn how to keep themselves safe in the local community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff have the expertise needed to deliver all areas of the curriculum effectively. As a result, some subjects are not taught as well as they could be. Leaders should ensure that all staff develop the expertise they need to teach all subjects equally well.
- The early years curriculum is not as well sequenced as the curriculum in the rest of the school. As a result, some children are not as well prepared in some areas of learning for Year 1 as they could be. Leaders should identify key knowledge and sequence this cumulatively towards end of early years curriculum expectations.

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 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 predecessor school to be good in October 2011.

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	141489
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10256966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanna Griffin
Principal	Isabel Borriello
Website	st-mary-bh.sch.life
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's RC Primary School joined Emmaus Multi Academy Company (MAC) in 2021, previously known as Saint Nicholas Owen Catholic MAC.
- St Mary's RC Primary School joined Saint Nicholas Owen Catholic MAC in 2014.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the principal, vice-principal, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors, including the chair of the

governing body, directors of the Emmaus MAC and a representative from the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the principal, who is the designated safeguarding leader. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- The lead inspector met with staff to discuss their workload and the support they receive to carry out their roles.
- The lead inspector spoke to pupils about how safe they feel in school and how they learn to keep themselves safe.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Emma Titchener, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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