

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Stanway Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B71 1RP

Inspection dates:	12 and 13 November 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

This well-led school has a strong sense of identity and community. It is proud of its history and traditions. It teaches pupils to be honest and respectful, and to look for ways to serve others. This helps pupils to feel good about themselves, which is reflected in their positive and caring attitudes.

Pupils are typically good mannered. They hold doors open for others and know the value of a kind comment or action. The school is a calm, harmonious place where pupils feel safe and secure. They enjoy lessons and greet others with smiles, warm words and good humour. Adults are positive role models. They show high levels of care and take time to listen to pupils and parents. Pupils know that an adult will always help them if they have any problems. Relationships across the school are excellent.

Leaders set high expectations for pupils' learning and further improvement. The school offers a broad curriculum and has a strong track record in teaching reading. However, standards in writing and mathematics have dropped. School leaders and staff know there is room for improvement for teaching and learning in these subjects. They are busy making changes for the better.

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

The school has some aspects to improve. It also has distinctive strengths. Staff treat pupils kindly and teach them the importance of respect for others. Pupils respond well to this, which shows in their good behaviour and thoughtful attitudes.

A notable strength is informed leadership. Leaders know what is working well and where further developments are needed. In mathematics, the curriculum is well designed but classroom practice varies in effectiveness. For example, the use of assessment to inform teaching is not sufficiently consistent. This slows pupils' progress. In response, new leadership is providing ambitious direction that is building on existing strengths and bringing improvement. Similarly, a refreshed approach to teaching letter formation and writing is supporting good habits from the start. Nevertheless, there is more to do to lift the quality of pupils' writing further and raise standards in mathematics. In going about this work, leaders consult with staff and consider their workload. This builds united team spirit and a shared vision for the school's next steps.

Reading is taught well. The school does a lot to support children's early language and communication. In the early years, staff teach children to listen carefully and to master letter sounds. The school's phonics programme builds on this. It is taught with successful consistency, including effective support for those who need extra help. If necessary, this continues into key stage 2 and enables all pupils to learn to read. In addition, activities such as lunchtime library club and 'blind date with a book' prompt interest and excitement about reading for pleasure.

The wider curriculum also has strengths. The school has identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn in different subjects. This is planned in a logical sequence from early

years to Year 6, with deliberate opportunities for pupils to revisit and use what they know. In design technology, art and design and geography, for instance, new projects require pupils to apply earlier learning and build further on it. This allows staff to check what pupils know and helps pupils to embed and strengthen their knowledge. A similar approach is evident across other wider curriculum subjects.

The school identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities early on. Staff have good communication with parents and carers and other professional services about pupils' needs and provide appropriate extra help. For example, the school offers a high level of speech and language therapy in order to support pupils' early speech.

In addition to classroom learning, the school teaches pupils how to take responsibility for others. Older pupils look after younger ones and school councillors and eco warriors help make decisions about school life. School trips to museums, galleries and a residential stay introduce pupils to new experiences and support their wider personal development.

The school keeps a careful eye on attendance, with appropriate reminders to parents when necessary. As a result, attendance has improved. The majority of pupils are rarely absent.

Governors are well informed. They have access to a range of reliable information. This keeps them up to date with what is going on and guides their decisions about school improvement. Parents are supportive and rightly say lots of positive things about the school. They value the school's family feel, the caring and visible school team and level of care provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of teaching and assessment in mathematics varies in effectiveness. This has hindered progress and standards. The school should continue to support staff with training and guidance to strengthen teaching and learning in mathematics. It should do this so that pupils make better progress in this subject and standards rise.
- Pupils' writing could be better. While the school has made some changes, including a new approach to letter formation and handwriting, these are at an early stage and pupils' standard of writing remains variable. The school should continue to support staff in implementing the new approaches to writing with consistency so that standards continue to rise.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	103989
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10343782
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Father David Jarratt
Headteacher	Ann Robinson
Website	www.st-marymagdalene.sandwell.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Lichfield. The last section 48 diocesan inspection took place in May 2017. The next section 48 diocesan inspection is due to take place this academic year.
- A private provider provides wraparound childcare on the school site. This is subject to a separate inspection at a different time.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors considered published performance data about the school. Inspectors also looked at a range of school documents. These included information about pupils’ behaviour, attendance, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, school improvement planning, governance and documents published on the school’s website.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils, governors and a local authority officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and design technology. In these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and considered pupils’ work. They also considered the curriculum in other subjects to check how they were organised, taught and assessed. An inspector observed some pupils reading to staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, parents and staff to gather general information about school life. They took account of the responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in classrooms, at lunchtime, on the playground, at clubs, in assemblies and at other times during the school day.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Harjit Chahal

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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