

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Poole

Devon Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 3QQ

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Poole has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Clare Tickel. The school is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Zoe Batten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ruth O'Donovan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this happy and friendly school. Regardless of need or ability, dedicated staff form trusting relationships with pupils. They greet pupils with a smile as they arrive each day. This creates a sense of safety and belonging for pupils, including for those who speak English as an additional language.

The school has high aspirations of all pupils, both academically and socially. Pupils live up to these. From their starting points, most achieve well. This is reflected in the outcomes achieved by Year 6 pupils in the 2024 national tests.

Pupils behave well and do their best. The school's '8 Bs' guide them in all they do and say. It is commonplace to see pupils 'be kind' by holding doors open for others and 'be peacemakers' by solving disagreements amicably.

Staff teach pupils to be proud advocates by using their voices and actions to help others. For example, 'Mini Vinnies' encourage pupils to write prayers of hope and eco-councillors raise environmental awareness. Pupils give back to the community by fundraising for those less fortunate than themselves. All of this contributes positively to the school's values of faith, love and hope.

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

In recent years, the school has worked at pace to construct an ambitious curriculum. Subject content informs staff what they need to teach and in what order. Pupils connect learning across the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils use their mathematical knowledge of scatter graphs to interpret the results of scientific investigations. In art, pupils learn about the formal elements of tone and shade. They then apply this to create complex pieces of art. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument and can use technical language to describe music, such as piano and forte.

Staff present information clearly to pupils. For example, they use visual images and break the curriculum down into smaller blocks of knowledge. Typically, staff ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified quickly. Staff adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language can learn alongside their peers and experience success. Pupils receive high-quality additional support to help overcome barriers to learning, such as emotional well-being time in 'the hub'.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. Staff choose books to enrich pupils' vocabulary and develop a sense of social responsibility. For example, pupils read books and discuss themes such as global warming and people with disabilities. Pupils confidently explain the meaning of words from the challenging texts they read. Most pupils leave the school as confident readers.

In Reception Year, staff make sure that children master sounds to read simple words. By the end of Year 1, most gain a secure knowledge of phonics. Staff use effective strategies to target pupils who struggle to keep up. This helps pupils to remember the sounds they have learned. However, a few staff lack the subject expertise to teach early reading with enough precision. Therefore, some pupils do not develop their phonics knowledge as quickly as they should.

In the main, pupils learn the basics of mathematics and writing well. Younger pupils can find different combinations of numbers up to 10. Many pupils record their work fluently and legibly. However, a minority of pupils, including some with SEND, do not secure accurate letter and number formation. In addition, a few do not have an effective pencil grip. This hinders their ability to write well.

Staff reward pupils' positive behaviour. For example, pupils strive to achieve a 'mission moment' for good learning. From the start of Reception, children follow the 'ready, respectful and safe' rules. In many lessons, pupils collaborate well and act maturely, most notably in Year 6.

The provision for pupils' wider development is a strength. Pupils take part in school musical productions and perform at singing concerts to develop their confidence. They recognise cultures that are different from their own by celebrating festivals from around the world. Trips to places of interest, such as Brownsea Island, complement the

curriculum and bring learning to life. Pupils know the importance of democracy when voting for leadership responsibilities. All of this, and much more, prepares pupils well for life beyond St Mary's.

Local governors hold the school to account effectively. Expert support from the trust has secured sustainable improvements to the quality of leadership at all levels. Staff feel trusted. They value the additional opportunities leaders provide to develop their roles, such as coaching. Most feel supported with their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of pupils, including some with SEND, do not master accurate letter formation and pencil grip in their written work. This hinders their ability to write effectively. The trust should ensure there are sufficient opportunities to secure early writing skills so that pupils can improve their writing fluency.
- A few staff do not have the subject expertise to teach the early reading programme with enough precision. This means that some pupils do not develop their phonics knowledge as well as they could. The trust should make sure that all staff who teach pupils to read have the knowledge and skills to use the agreed approaches effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2019.

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	140777
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10344678
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	400
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ruth O'Donovan
CEO of the trust	Zoe Batten
Headteacher	Clare Tickel
Website	www.st-marys.poole.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust.
- The headteacher took up their post in September 2023, following a period as interim executive headteacher.
- This is a Catholic primary school. It is part of the Diocese of Plymouth. The school received a section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in February 2020. Its next inspection under section 48 is due within five years of this date.
- The school currently uses one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other school staff. He also met with members of the local governing board, the school improvement officer and the director of education for the trust.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss how the school supports their workload and well-being.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. He considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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