

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Mary's CofE Primary School

Brooke Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9HJ

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2022

Outcome

St Mary's CofE Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils think their school is amazing. They appreciate the rich opportunities on offer from inspirational visiting speakers and activities for them to develop socially and culturally. Parents and carers are grateful for the way leaders have maintained the high quality of education for their children despite a serious flood in 2021 which damaged much of the premises.

Leaders leave nothing to chance in their determination to offer an exceptional education for pupils. The well-considered content and design of the curriculum reflect leaders' high expectations for what pupils will learn. Staff are completely in-tune with these aims. They share leaders' ambition to expect the best for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils live up to these expectations and achieve highly.

Pupils seldom need reminders about how to behave well. They concentrate when their work is demanding and cooperate thoughtfully with one another during breaktimes and at lunchtime. Pupils are very confident that staff tackle rare instances of bullying promptly and fairly.

Pupils thrive on the wide range of responsibilities they are offered. They decide which charities to support and learn the importance of public service through, for example, their roles as 'eco-councillors.' Leaders make sure that pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their future lives.

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

Leaders and staff share a single-minded commitment to ensuring the curriculum helps pupils achieve well right from the start in the early years. Some leaders positively influence curriculum design in other schools by sharing their expertise and enabling others to learn from the successful curriculum at St Mary's. Governors understand the

aims and ambitions of school leaders and offer them challenge from a very well-informed viewpoint.

The whole curriculum is very effectively organised. Content is chosen with a clear purpose in mind. Subject leaders leave no stone unturned when making sure pupils are learning and remembering the skills and knowledge that are expected.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading. Teachers use and adapt the agreed programme of study so pupils enjoy books that closely match their abilities. Parents can find out how reading is taught by watching explanatory videos on the school's website. Pupils learn to use phonics to read new words. Pupils find learning to read fun. Leaders know which pupils need more help with their reading and make sure they catch up. Pupils are expected to learn a wide range of new words. They become skilled at using text as evidence to support their views and opinions about the books they read. The book reward scheme provides a popular incentive. This means that pupils enjoy specific books specially chosen to represent a wide range of styles and cultures which pupils may otherwise not experience.

In each subject, the curriculum is expertly organised and put into practice. Teachers choose how to use lesson time skilfully. They make sure pupils can move on with their learning as soon as they are ready. Expectations for what pupils can achieve are very high right from the start. For example, children in the early years can identify the number of faces on three-dimensional shapes. They learn to use precise mathematical language and are expected to use this when investigating the inspiring activities on offer indoors and outside. Additional adults who support pupils with SEND work closely with teachers to make sure lessons are adapted so that pupils can achieve well and enjoy learning.

Teachers have the strong subject knowledge they need to teach difficult concepts in an accurate way. This inspires pupils to be deeply interested in the subjects taught. The sequence of learning has been very well thought through. For example, pupils learn about the cityscape of London in Year 2 geography before they go on to study the Great Fire of London. This helps them understand more deeply how the fire reshaped the city in which they live. In science, pupils use what they have learned previously to help understand new ideas. For example, they use their knowledge of friction when learning about air resistance and viscosity.

Pupils very rarely feel inclined to let their attention stray in lessons, let alone cause disruption. They are fascinated by the way teachers explain and demonstrate new ideas to them. Children in the early years are often seen independently exploring the activities on offer and sharing equipment thoughtfully. They know how to adjust their behaviour for different occasions, such as when eating together and using quiet voices for discussion in the dining hall.

Wider opportunities for pupils' development are as skilfully planned and thoughtfully considered as other aspects of the curriculum. For example, pupils have experienced a range of sports such as archery and rock climbing which they may have had limited chances to try before. There is a strong focus on celebrating diversity in all of its forms. Leaders deliberately plan for pupils to learn about people who have succeeded in different

fields despite their special needs or disabilities. The STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum enables pupils to dip into aspects of learning which are likely to be part of their secondary education and experience the latest technology such as virtual reality and 3D printing.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They can identify particular training which has had a strong impact on the help and support they give pupils to learn. Staff think the workload is reduced because the curriculum plans and guidance are so well organised and clearly communicated by leaders. Staff new to teaching feel very well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand their roles in helping keep pupils safe. Leaders use well organised, detailed records to provide other professionals with the information they need to offer help if a concern about a pupil comes to light.

Leaders adapt the programme of learning to respond if they notice more needs to be done to help pupils understand how to stay safe, including when using social media.

Governors and leaders have been mindful of managing the additional risks which may be posed by the repair work which is continuing in the school following a considerable flood in 2021.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Mary's Walthamstow CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, to be outstanding in March 2016.

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

Unique reference number	144238
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10201091
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	557
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Moss
Headteacher	Jennifer Matthews
Website	www.stmaryscofe.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Mary's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2017. When its predecessor school, St Mary's Walthamstow CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school has a Church of England religious character. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in 2023, after being deferred due to the flood at the school in 2021. The predecessor school underwent a section 48 inspection in June 2016.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is in a hard federation with another primary school. Both schools are members of the same academy trust.
- In the summer of 2021, a flood damaged much of the ground floor of the school. At the time of the inspection, repair work was continuing and some classes were using temporary accommodation within the school premises.

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.
- The inspector completed deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and science. During each deep dive, the inspector spoke with pupils, looked at examples of their work, visited lessons, talked to teachers and met with subject leaders. The inspector also heard some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders. He also spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust to which the school belongs, the diocesan adviser and representatives of the school's governing body. He held a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector took account of documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding and the school's plans for improvement.
- The inspector looked at the responses submitted by parents and staff to Ofsted's surveys and considered emails submitted by parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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