

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Ladywell Road, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 5DE

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Clare Morton. This school is part of St Mary's Anglican Academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Stather.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Mary's Church of England Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Mary's CofE VA Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Church of England Primary School aims for all pupils to 'reach for the stars'. Pupils flourish in every respect at this exceptional school. Staff, pupils and parents are proud of their school. One parent's comment was typical of many when they stated, 'I'm so proud that my child attends this school as I believe that it will give him the best start for a bright future'.

The school has an unwavering commitment to serving pupils, families and the community. Pupils consistently meet the school's high expectations. By the end of each key stage, pupils master the knowledge and skills set out in the school's ambitious curriculum. Pupils produce high-quality work across many different subjects. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils thrive due to the strong relationships that they build with staff and each other. Their behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exemplary. They are enthusiastic and resilient, demonstrating high levels of engagement with learning from the very start.

Pupils are encouraged to be aspirational. They start thinking about possible future careers from the early years. Past 'alumni' are used effectively as examples of what they could achieve in the future.

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

The school has thought deeply about what pupils should learn, both personally and academically. It has carefully identified the knowledge that pupils should learn across a broad range of subjects. This curriculum thinking starts at the earliest possible moment in the two-year-old provision. Much of the curriculum is taught through 'mini missions' where pupils learn a subject in depth. Pupils get lots of practise and opportunities to revise their learning between topics during each subject's weekly 'sticky starters'. All of this means pupils learn the curriculum exceptionally well.

Staff are adept at delivering the intended curriculum. They ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. Teachers make adaptations to work depending on pupils' needs. They carefully identify and address any gaps in learning that may arise. This means that all pupils can flourish alongside their peers.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified at the earliest possible moment. This is usually in the early years. The school meticulously ensures that the specific needs of pupils with SEND are addressed. As part of this work, the school makes highly effective use of other professionals. In addition, leaders ensure that staff have the skills needed to meet the needs of all pupils.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. They settle quickly into the purposeful and highly engaging learning environment. Adults skilfully and deliberately develop children's speaking and listening skills by engaging them in conversation. Children quickly develop independence and show high levels of self-control.

Reading is a top priority for the school. Staff deliver the school's phonics programme exceptionally well. Children in the early years quickly develop the skills and knowledge needed to begin to read words. Pupils practise the sounds they have learned using carefully chosen texts. Staff skilfully support any pupils who find reading more difficult. This helps these pupils to keep up with the phonics programme. By the end of key stage one, almost all pupils can read fluently and accurately.

The school widely promotes a love of reading. There are many attractive and appropriate reading areas inside and outside of school, including a reading bus on the playground. Pupils are encouraged to read at home and enjoy earning rewards for this. Across the school, pupils are read to widely and often.

Pupils relish all the school has to offer and enjoy a wealth of carefully planned experiences. These experiences include a wide range of educational visits to local and national museums, parks and animal centres. These outings not only aid pupils' learning but also broaden their life experiences. There are a huge range of opportunities for pupils to take on a leadership role in school. These responsibilities include being school councillors and subject, community and farm ambassadors. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to debate issues during 'chatty Tuesdays', which parents can also contribute to.

Previously too many pupils have missed too much time off school. The school has worked proactively with parents to improve attendance. This is having an extremely positive effect. Far fewer pupils are now missing too much time off school.

Trustees are highly committed to the school. They share the school's high ambitions for all pupils to succeed in life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	144210
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10322902
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Stather
Headteacher	Clare Morton
Website	www.stmarysce.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- There has been a change of headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school operates a before and after school provision.
- The school makes provision for two-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher and senior assistant headteacher. He met three members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust. He also held a telephone discussion with a representative of the diocese.

- 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, design and technology, physical education and geography. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and viewed examples of pupils' work. Inspectors also examined work in English, history and science. An inspector looked at documentation in history, music and art and design. An inspector also spoke to pupils about languages, computing and art and design.
- An inspector observed children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspectors considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. An inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's improvement priorities, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the trust board.

Inspection team

Barry Yeardsley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Ray	Ofsted Inspector

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