

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Infant School

Bedford Park, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2AQ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Mary's Catholic Infants School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at school with smiles on their faces and greet the staff warmly each day. Pupils are happy and safe here. There is a strong community feel. Leaders encourage parents and carers to contribute to their child's education. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour at all times. Bullying is extremely rare and is dealt with quickly by staff.

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Everyone models the school's values. Pupils' beliefs and differences are celebrated. Singing plays a key part in every school day, which pupils enjoy. All pupils come together regularly to sing in assemblies. They visit care homes in the local community and perform to residents. Children in early years enjoy learning both inside and outside the classroom. They make good use of the school environment, such as the nurture garden.

Pupils learn how they can best support people in need in the local area. They raise money through purposeful fundraising activities. Pupils have responsibilities in school and have a say in changes they want made. They take part in regular school trips.

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

Leaders ensure that all pupils access a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders' curricular thinking typically builds on children's knowledge and skills from the early years. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge they want pupils to know and remember.

In mathematics, children in early years learn to understand number through well-selected resources. Staff build children's knowledge sequentially, such as how amounts of numbers can be represented. Pupils build on these firm foundations throughout the school. They are taught to use a range of calculation methods accurately.

Leaders ensure that staff have strong subject knowledge. For example, in music, teachers deliver the curriculum with confidence, including developing pupils' expertise to play different instruments. In the early years, children learn to play percussion instruments. By the time they are in Year 1, many play these instruments confidently.

Teachers check routinely what pupils know and what they need extra help with. They make appropriate adaptations so that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can succeed. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. They work closely with external specialists to provide effective support for these pupils.

Across the school, staff promote a love for reading. They encourage pupils to read books daily at school and at home. Pupils have regular story times and listen to teachers reading high-quality texts. Leaders have ensured that all staff receive training in the school's new phonics programme. This helps them to teach early reading effectively. In Reception, staff help children to quickly develop their phonics knowledge. Staff typically support pupils who need additional help to develop their early reading well. However, the school's phonics approach is not fully embedded in Years 1 and 2. As a result, some of these pupils do not receive consistently strong support to catch up as quickly as they should. This limits these pupils' reading fluency.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. There is rarely any disruption to learning. This makes it easy for all pupils to concentrate on their work.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of experiences outside the classroom. They enjoy many local educational visits. Pupils shared their 'magical' experiences of seeing ballet and opera performances. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to develop their talents and interests, including through well-attended clubs. Pupils are taught to understand the importance of what contributing to a worthy cause means. They are very well equipped to cope with the requirements for the next stages of their education.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel part of the community. Staff are extremely proud to work here. Leaders treat them with respect and care about their well-being. They make sure that staff's workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand their school community well. They work closely with external agencies to support families and pupils. Leaders escalate and manage any concerns they have in a timely manner. All staff are vigilant and receive frequent safeguarding training. Members of the governing body fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are knowledgeable about safeguarding and regularly check leaders' safeguarding procedures.

Pupils all have at least one adult they would talk to if they were concerned. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although leaders have made sure that the curriculum is broad and balanced, they have not identified the exact knowledge they want pupils to know and remember in some subjects. This means pupils do not build subject-specific knowledge in

these subjects as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that they identify the key knowledge in each subject, with clear end points for pupils to learn.

- The new programme for teaching phonics is not fully embedded in Years 1 and 2. A minority of pupils who need extra support with reading do not catch up as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that the new programme is delivered consistently and securely so that these pupils develop their reading fluency swiftly.

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	142246
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10228509
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hugh Keast
Headteacher	Victoria Mitchell
Website	www.stmaryscatholicprimaryschoolstrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has formed a multi-academy trust with a local junior school. They share a governing body and board of trustees.
- The school currently does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders from the school. They met with the chair of trustees, who is also part of the governing body. They also spoke with the local authority school improvement adviser and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors met pupils to understand their views on the school.

- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons with senior leaders, met with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the behaviour of pupils during lesson visits and around the school. They observed pupils as they arrived at school in the morning.
- Inspectors considered the effectiveness of safeguarding through discussions with leaders, teachers and support staff. They looked at records relating to safeguarding, including pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being. They also took into consideration the views of staff, pupils and parents, including through Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation provided by the school. This included curriculum documentation and school policies.

Inspection team

Aliki Constantopoulou, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lando Du Plooy	Ofsted Inspector

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