

Inspection of St Mary's CofE Primary School, Amersham

School Lane, Amersham, Buckinghamshire HP7 0EL

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's CofE Primary is a school where inclusivity shines through. Every pupil receives a warm welcome at the start of each day. Pupils feel part of a family that is fully focused on helping them to succeed and keeping them safe. Pupils rise willingly to meet adults' high expectations for behaviour. Pupils value the education that they receive. They recognise how it helps to prepare them well for the future.

Pupils recognise that the school has high expectations for what they can achieve. They love learning new and exciting things alongside their friends. They are proud of their achievements and their school. As a result, pupils achieve well. Last year, the school's published outcomes in key stage 2 were well above the national average, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Pupils broaden their horizons. They develop high aspirations for the future through inspiring workshops and careers fairs. These support pupils' understanding of how to achieve their goals. Pupils relish opportunities to showcase their talents and interests during assemblies or community performances. They benefit from the extensive range of creative, sporting, environmental and cultural activities the school offers. Pupils appreciate the varied sporting events, where they can compete against other schools. As a result, pupils flourish here.

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

The school's personal development provision is exceptional. It expertly crafts experiences and enrichment opportunities. The school prioritises help for disadvantaged pupils to remove financial barriers to participation. The uptake of extra-curricular activities is high, including trips to the theatre and environmental projects. Opportunities to take part in clubs, charity events and trips are abundant. Many pupils take on a wide array of leadership responsibilities. Pupils are proud to serve as house captains, on the school council or as sports leaders. Through these, pupils hone their social skills and develop a strong sense of character. Dedicated work within nurture sessions utilises the beautiful school grounds, helping to build pupils' confidence, social skills and engagement in learning.

The ambitious curriculum is structured carefully. Pupils build their knowledge securely from when they start in the early years until they leave at the end of Year 6. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, and their professional development is prioritised. This includes those who are at the start of their careers. Teaching is effective across the school. This helps pupils' learning develop over time. Teachers know what individual pupils have previously learned and what they need to learn next.

There are effective systems to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND learn and play happily alongside their peers. They are fully included in all aspects of the school. However, in places, staff do not support some pupils with SEND effectively enough. This means these pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Teaching pupils to read is a top priority. Children learn phonics right from the start of Reception using a well-structured programme. Expert staff deliver this programme with complete diligence. Pupils who need additional help to learn to read benefit from carefully targeted support. This helps them to catch up quickly with their peers. Carefully selected books captivate pupils, helping them to widen their vocabulary and improve their ideas for writing.

Pupils have warm and caring relationships with staff. The foundations of this positive culture are laid down firmly in the early years. Pupils respond well to the positive modelling and praise that they receive from adults. Pupils quickly recognise the importance of treating others with respect and being respected themselves. The school has a sharp focus on attendance. It has a comprehensive understanding of the patterns relating to pupil absence and uses this information effectively. As a result, attendance is high.

Leaders at all levels share a strong moral commitment to the school, its pupils and the wider community. Governors are well informed about the school's performance and where to target further attention. As a result, governors make decisions in the best interests of pupils. They make regular checks to assure themselves that their actions have the impact they intend. Staff are incredibly positive about how they are supported in achieving a healthy work-life balance. The school expertly balances staff's well-being with a relentless focus on improving pupils' learning and lives. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work to provide a high-quality education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils with SEND do not get the support that they need in lessons. This impedes some of their learning. The school should continue to ensure that teachers understand how to support pupils with SEND by making effective adaptations to the curriculum so they can achieve well overall.

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	110455
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10379742
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jacqui Rouse
Headteacher	Julie Hills
Website	www.stmarysce.bucks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 January 2020, under Section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Oxford. The school last received a section 48 inspection in January 2024.
- The school provides wrap-around care through a breakfast and after-school club.
- Nursery provision at the school is for four-year-old children.
- The school currently uses one registered 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 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, members of the school's wider leadership team, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with representatives from the Diocese of Oxford and the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection, as well as the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers shared through Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments. They also spoke with some parents at the start of the inspection.

Inspection team

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lorraine Greco	Ofsted Inspector
Carly Rissen	Ofsted Inspector

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