

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Elliott's Hill, Brixton, Plymouth, Devon PL8 2AG

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since November 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high aspirations for all its pupils. Most pupils achieve well. Pupils at St Mary's also receive exceptional, additional learning experiences. The well-thought-out opportunities to develop their personal skills are impressive at this very inclusive school. Every pupil in Year 6 recently visited New Zealand to learn about global citizenship. Staff go above and beyond in every sense. Parents also share this view. A typical parent comment, which summed up the views of many, was, 'Children at St Mary's are seen and heard.' Parents say that they would recommend the school.

The school environment is calm and welcoming. Pupils behave well, demonstrating positive attitudes to their learning. They say if bullying did occur, it would be 'shut down immediately'. Social times are harmonious and a hive of activity. Older pupils thrive in their leadership roles. They ensure that younger pupils are well cared for. Pupils describe the school as 'one big family'. They feel safe, and they are.

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

The federation, alongside the school, has designed an ambitious curriculum that starts in the Reception Year. Children get off to a flying start. They learn the routines and behaviours that they need to know to be able to learn the curriculum successfully. As a result, they are well prepared for Year 1. The curriculum is refined carefully to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Inclusivity permeates the school's work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. Effective identification of pupils' needs and adaptations to teaching of the curriculum ensure that all pupils achieve well.

Local, national and global issues are threaded through the school's work to ensure that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain. The school's curriculum content is carefully thought out so that pupils' knowledge builds securely over time. Teachers typically deliver the curriculum well. Throughout the curriculum, pupils have opportunities to revisit key learning. However, some of staff's checks on how well pupils retain their curriculum knowledge are not effective enough. This affects staff's teaching of the curriculum and leads to some pupils having gaps in their knowledge. In addition, teachers do not always use the information they know about what pupils can achieve well enough.

Reading is a high priority. The school's approach to teaching pupils how to read is effective. There is an impressive consistency in this aspect of the curriculum across the school. Children learn to read as soon as they join the Reception Year. Children quickly learn how to blend sounds together to read simple words. This enables them to read books that staff ensure are well matched to the sounds they learn. There are effective systems in place to support any pupil who falls behind with their reading.

Staff promote a love of reading through a wide range of carefully considered activities. The school provides pupils with access to many high-quality fiction and non-fiction books. These help pupils to learn information well in different curriculum subjects. In the Reception class, children get excited about their daily book vote. They listen intently to staff who immerse them in the exciting world of traditional stories. Older pupils treasure

their reading time at school, where staff expose them to a rich range of texts and authors.

The school has high expectations of pupils' conduct. The school teaches pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour. There are clear routines and expectations in place. As a result, pupils behave well and disruption is rare.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is exemplary. Pupils benefit from an impressive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. These include scuba diving, mountain biking and gorge walking, to name but a few. The school is at the centre of many community projects. Parents describe the school as the heartbeat of the community. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of what it means to be a good citizen.

The school is well led. Governors and the federation know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the school. Staff are fiercely proud to work at the school. They appreciate the steps that the school takes to support 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)

- In some of the curriculum, the school does not check carefully enough what knowledge pupils have learned. This leads to some misconceptions in pupils' knowledge not being resolved by teachers. As a result, some pupils do not reach the standards they are capable of. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to inform teaching of the curriculum so that all pupils reach their full potential.

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	113478
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10344484
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	94
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Nicholas Glanfield
Executive headteacher	Martin Harding
Head of School	Adrian Clements
Website	www.stmarys-brixton.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a head of school who oversees its day-to-day work.
- The school does not use any providers of alternative provision.
- The school is part of United Schools Federation.
- There is before- and after-school provision operated by the school.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school and last received a section 48 inspection in January 2018. The next inspection should take place before June 2026.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, executive leaders, curriculum leaders, teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body and with the chair of the federation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, English and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including improvement planning.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted’s survey of staff.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Shirley	Ofsted Inspector

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