

Inspection of St Mary & St Michael Catholic Primary School

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development and welfare	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils settle in quickly when they join St Mary and St Michael Catholic Primary School. Clear routines in the Reception Year mean that children soon develop the skills they need to learn and get along well. Staff recognise positive behaviours, such as when each class appoints a 'Steward of the Week'. This award acknowledges pupils who demonstrate the school's values, such as being kind.

As pupils get older, they take on increasing responsibilities. Older pupils look after the younger ones by becoming play leaders or being reading 'buddies' to children in the early years. Pupils use their school council to put their views across. For example, they help to decide the clubs that are on offer, such as 'eco-warriors', who take responsibility for the local environment by litter-picking.

Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils are open with staff about any worries or difficulties. The school's expectations of what pupils have the potential to learn and do through the curriculum have risen. When pupils find their learning challenging, they are supported to succeed. This helps everyone to feel included and to enjoy the curriculum together.

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

Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum which has been carefully designed to reflect the school's values. Recent topics have made a strong impression. Increasingly, pupils remember their learning for longer because there are more opportunities to recall and revisit important content. The school has updated the curriculum, so that the detailed knowledge that pupils will learn is clear. This is part of an ongoing process and further development is planned in some subjects. For example, in subjects where the curriculum is new, the school has not settled upon a clear approach to assessment.

Reading is central to the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils are encouraged to read a wide range of high-quality, age-appropriate texts. They find this inspiring and it helps them to build positive reading habits. The school engages in national and local events to celebrate reading, for example 'Non-fiction November' in collaboration with their local library. Children begin learning to read as soon as they join the Reception Year. They read from books that are closely matched to the sounds they know. If children find some of the phonic sounds difficult, support is provided.

However, in phonics and mathematics, there are sometimes delays before pupils are taught the curriculum content that they are ready to learn. Some pupils spend too much time applying what they already know, rather than learning new things or using their knowledge in different contexts. The school's approach to assessment means that pupils' phonics learning is frequently interrupted, slowing the rate at which they become confident readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. For example, the school is quick to spot children in the early years with difficulties in speech or communication. Where necessary, pupils receive support from specialists in speech and language, or to learn English as an additional language. Staff have a good understanding of how pupils learn and the difficulties they face. As a result, teaching supports pupils with SEND to succeed.

Pupils attend well and value the educational experiences the school provides. They learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they become knowledgeable about water safety, using the school's onsite swimming pool. They put this knowledge into practice when using the local beaches. Many participate in clubs and go on trips, focusing on features of local interest. This helps to promote pupils' social skills and independence.

The school has had a high staff turnover in recent years and the impact of this continues to be felt. There is variability in how well the curriculum is taught, or in the way pupils' behaviour is managed. Despite this, pupils usually learn and conduct themselves well. Staff have worked together in challenging circumstances to bring about sustained improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. Nevertheless, the school does not engage consistently well with staff on matters affecting their work. Some staff do not have confidence that their views will be taken into account when decisions are made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- The way the curriculum is taught sometimes reduces the progress pupils make. Pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could because their phonics teaching is not consistently prioritised. Pupils' application of mathematical knowledge is limited because they spend too much time revisiting content they have fully understood. The school should ensure that pupils learn the curriculum content they are ready for without unnecessary delay.
- The school does not use assessment effectively in every subject. Consequently, the school does not fully understand the impact of the curriculum in some subjects. The school should use assessment to identify where pupils' knowledge is less secure, so that the curriculum can be adapted accordingly.
- Some staff say that the school does not engage constructively with them to gain a better understanding of the pressures upon them. As a result, some staff do not have confidence that their views will be listened to. The school should reassure all staff that their views will be considered.

School details

Inspection number	10334369
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	The States of Guernsey
Headteacher	Ms Helen Willetts
Website	www.stmary-stmichael.co.uk/
Date of previous Ofsted inspection	Not previously inspected by Ofsted

Information about this school

- The school provides a Catholic education and is part of the Diocese of Portsmouth. The school's religious education provision was last inspected by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate in February 2024.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 35 of the Guernsey Education Law 1970.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, including the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector spoke with officers from the Education Office and a representative of the Diocese of Portsmouth.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils

about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.

- 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 considered the views of parents who responded to the Guernsey Parent Survey. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the questionnaires, issued at the time of the inspection.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tonwen Empson

Ofsted Inspector

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