

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Fuller Street, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN16 0JH

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is Diane Wright. The school is a single academy trust. The headteacher is the executive leader of the trust board. There is also a governing body with responsibility for the school, which is chaired by Mark Broughton.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is only one rule at St Mary's, 'Do everything in love.' Pupils are respectful and do their utmost to act with the best intentions. They are kind, friendly and supportive of each other. Pupils' positive behaviour is borne out of warm relationships with staff. Staff make it a priority to get to know each pupil individually. Typically, parents feel this is a loving, caring school where children thrive.

Pastoral support is high quality. Pupils are supported to learn and attend well. They learn to keep themselves healthy and safe, including online. Pupils feel happy and secure. They know that if they have any worries, they have trusted adults to share them with.

The school ensures that every pupil benefits from an impressive number of clubs. The wide range ignites pupils' interests. As well as sports, they can develop talents such as knitting and skateboarding.

The school aims to take pupils on an 'amazing journey' towards academic success and personal growth. For the most part, this journey is well considered. Pupils become fluent readers and confident mathematicians. They achieve well in statutory assessments and in most areas of the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy their learning.

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

The school actively promotes reading as a fundamental life skill. Pupils know that the more they read, the more they will learn. They enjoy reading and staff make sure they read regularly. The 'Reading Well' library is well stocked with engaging texts to choose from. Pupils are inspired by the fascinating choice of books on display around school that are linked to their topics. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme effectively to help pupils learn to read. Children get off to a flying start as soon as they start school. Staff ensure that pupils receive the right support to keep up when this is needed.

The curriculum is ambitious, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For most subjects, it is carefully crafted for mixed-age classes. Where the curriculum is well designed, teachers deliver it effectively. They provide clear explanations of new concepts. They effectively check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. Pupils gain a secure understanding of what they are taught. They make links between their current learning and what they have learned previously.

In most subjects, the school has identified the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn. The school has further developed the curriculum by identifying 'golden threads' of connected knowledge that are intended to support pupils to remember their learning. However, this is not always the case. In some subjects, it is sometimes not clear what pupils must learn and what opportunities they have to revisit this learning. As a result, in these subjects, pupils do not have the basic knowledge they need when learning new topics. Pupils find it hard to remember what they have learned previously and cannot successfully build on this.

The school ensures that across most subjects, suitable learning activities are selected for pupils. Well-trained staff accurately identify and know the needs of pupils, including those with SEND. In these subjects, the school adapts tasks appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils. However, at times, this is not consistent. The activities selected in some subjects do not match with what the school intends pupils to learn. This hinders pupils from securing or deepening their knowledge when learning.

The 'amazing journey' curriculum strengthens pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to consider how they can improve their learning and develop resilience. For example, the school wants pupils to be philosophers and ask 'big questions'. Through collective worship, pupils learn about and reflect on important values in modern society. Pupils embrace different cultures and faiths. The 'Worship Warriors', who help lead collective worship, are of a range of faiths. Pupils are proud to hold roles like these. They learn about personal responsibility and contributing positively to the community. The language and phonics ambassadors support younger pupils with reading. The school council is active, recently organising the clean-up of the local park.

The school ensures that pupils learn how to behave well. Children learn the expectations and routines as soon as they start in the Reception Year. They learn to put toys and equipment away after using them. Children show good manners, sitting and helping themselves at the snack table. Across school, pupils behave sensibly in class and generally work hard. They are supported fairly and consistently when their behaviour is not as it should be. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their actions and make improvements.

Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. Leaders regularly check on their well-being. Staff appreciate the steps taken to lighten their workload. Governors know the community well and have a clear vision for the school. They make their own checks and seek external assurance to ensure that the school meets statutory responsibilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not designed well in a few subjects. In these subjects, key areas of knowledge are not identified or revisited often enough. As a result, pupils do not remember what they have been taught or connect knowledge in the way the school intended. The school should ensure that important knowledge is clearly identified for these subjects, and that the curriculum is designed effectively in a manner that enables pupils to remember and connect their knowledge well.
- Sometimes, the learning activities given to pupils do not help them to learn the intended curriculum effectively. This limits the depth of knowledge that pupils can acquire. As a result, pupils' knowledge is not secure and can be limited. The school

should ensure that learning activities are designed to meet the intended curriculum to support pupils to achieve consistently well.

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	139460
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10347564
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Broughton
Headteacher	Diane Wright
Website	www.stmarysprimarykettering.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mary's is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school within the Diocese of Peterborough. The most recent section 48 inspection of this Church of England school took place in January 2024. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within five school years.
- The school does not currently use any 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.
- The lead inspector met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust, and spoke to a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders of the school and considered a range of documentation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing, history and geography. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The lead inspector listened as some pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered evidence about some other curriculum subjects.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during breaktime.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.

Inspection team

Claire Stylianides, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Lowther

Ofsted Inspector

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