

Inspection of a good school: St Mary's Church of England Infant School

19 Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 4AZ

Inspection dates:

22 May 2024

The executive headteacher of this school is Deborah Seccull. This school is part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Anne Dellar, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathy Winrow.

Outcome

St Mary's Church of England Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto, 'Together we love to learn and learn to love' permeates across all aspects of daily life. Pupils feel happy and cared for in this inclusive and nurturing place. As one pupil said, 'You will always find an encouraging friend in our school.'

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and academic progress. They forge supportive and caring relationships with pupils and their families. Unkindness is not tolerated here. Adults deal with pupils' worries straight away. Pupils strive to be the best they can be and achieve well. They relish receiving the 'Golden Certificate' in recognition of their thoughtful attitude and academic achievements.

Pupils look forward to a wide range of trips, which enhance their learning, for example visits to Oxford, Warwick Castle, the farm and the wildlife park. Each pupil is valued as a unique individual and member of the school community. Pupils are proudly preparing their 'floral wheelbarrow' for the Witney in Bloom event. They are also excited to take part in the May Day dance and the Witney Feast Festival. Pupils are responsible citizens who organise litter picks and avidly look after their local area. They appreciate taking part in extra-curricular activities such as yoga, tennis and mud club.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that has been meticulously crafted for the school's context. For example, pupils learn about their local heritage through visits to the medieval church nearby. The curriculum breaks important learning down into clear, small steps, which build progressively over time. Staff make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive additional

help or adaptations in a timely and effective fashion. This support is closely matched to their individual starting points and ensures that pupils with SEND become increasingly independent in all areas of their work. As a result of this, children in the early years are suitably prepared for Year 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils are ready for the challenges of the key stage 2 curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Overall, they ensure that pupils revisit their learning regularly and make links in their work. Staff encourage pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary to discuss and explore their work in different subjects. This helps pupils to develop their ideas of the themes they study. However, sometimes, staff do not consistently check and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. They introduce new work too quickly. Where this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Staff promote pupils' love of reading at every opportunity. Pupils look forward to the daily 'relax and recommend a book' sessions. They especially enjoy listening to the stories and poems that staff read and share. Children are introduced to phonics from the start of Reception. Well-trained staff make sure that any pupils who fall behind receive the support they need to catch up quickly. As pupils move through the school, they read an interesting range of texts with increasing fluency and accuracy.

The school places equal importance on pupils' wider personal development. Pupils learn about, and celebrate, diversity. They develop an understanding of different religions, cultures and festivals. Pupils are taught how to look after themselves and others. They learn about safe, healthy relationships and responsible behaviour. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They discuss and debate topics maturely such as immigration, disability and neurodiversity. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils are respectful and caring towards their peers. They move calmly around the school during breaktimes and settle quickly into their lessons. Pupils listen attentively and act as encouraging role models for each other. Their excellent attitudes are shown in their high rates of attendance.

The trust plays an integral part in supporting the school. Governors use their extensive knowledge and experience to offer appropriate support and challenge. Staff appreciate working at the school. They value the time that leaders give them to work on important tasks as a team. Parents appreciate the regular communication they receive. One parent captured the views of others by saying, 'We pick up very happy and fulfilled children at the end of each day. They are celebrated in such a loving way. Staff are approachable, and they always have the time to talk through any concerns or questions we have.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, staff do not check and address gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding carefully enough. Where this happens, pupils do not embed the essential knowledge that they need to learn and remember well. As a result, they do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff are confident in the pedagogical practices to help pupils embed important knowledge in all areas of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Mary's Church of England Controlled Infant School, to be good in February 2015.

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	142508
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10322008
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Winrow
CEO of the trust	Anne Dellar
Headteacher	Deborah Seccull (Executive headteacher) Emma Dunstan (Deputy Headteacher)
Website	www.st-marys-witney.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the ODST in December 2015.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. Its last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in March 2020, when it received an excellent judgement overall.
- The executive headteacher is also responsible for another local school, The Batt CE Primary School. The local governing body works jointly across both settings.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 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.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees, the chief executive officer of the ODS, the chair of the local governing body and two governors. She also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the Diocese of Oxford.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. They also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Parker

His Majesty's Inspector

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