

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Main Road, Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8RJ

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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

The headteacher of this school is Theresa Walker. This school is part of Berlesduna Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sean Tobin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robin Taverner.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this school. They are safe, having developed trusted relationships with the adults who care for them. They epitomise the school's core Christian values of thankfulness, compassion, community, truthfulness, courage and forgiveness.

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic learners who want to succeed. They show resilience in approaching challenging tasks. Many pupils achieve well as a result. However, pupils do not always apply their writing skills across the curriculum as well as they could.

The diverse range of opportunities in school enables pupils to be proactive in making a difference to the lives of others. They are proud to adopt leadership roles as class ambassadors, eco-warriors and librarians. They actively seek to support younger children. Their work in supporting a charity in Ghana demonstrates their compassion for others.

Visitors to school inspire pupils to follow their own talents and interests. These include a paraplegic speaker, an Olympian and a symphony orchestra. Along with visits, including film studios and 'glamping', pupils can see opportunities to follow their dreams.

Pupils work closely with the local heritage club and the Royal British Legion. They participate in trust-wide competitions, including poetry slams and orienteering. These exciting, high-quality experiences securely prepare pupils for their future lives.

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

The curriculum is rich, inclusive and ambitious. With pupils at its heart, the curriculum ensures that all pupils have a 'voice'. Pupils develop their views and identity through this.

Children in the early years quickly learn key social skills through their interaction with skilled adults. Adults listen to children's ideas and incorporate their interests within their learning. Children learn and develop through play and exploration. Learning activities grow in complexity to enable a smooth transition to formal learning in Year 1.

The school prioritises early reading as fundamental to the progress of all pupils. Pupils start learning to read immediately after they start in Reception. They learn through focused and interactive phonics sessions delivered by expert adults. Staff quickly identify any pupils who do not keep up with the pace of the phonics programme. These pupils receive the appropriate support to improve their reading accuracy and fluency. As pupils progress through the school, they access a wide

range of increasingly sophisticated and diverse texts. As a result, most pupils achieve well in reading.

Across all subject areas, teachers deliver effective lessons supported by their in-depth subject knowledge. They provide learning activities that sustain pupils' interests. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' writing in a few subjects. Pupils do not routinely apply the grammar, punctuation and structural skills that they already know. This means that pupils do not always get the opportunity they need to practise their writing skills or convey their thinking as well as they might. As a result, some more able pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

Inclusivity is central to the school. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access the full curriculum. This includes opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills with increasing fluency and independence. The staff identify these pupils quickly and provide the most appropriate support. They liaise effectively with external agencies to secure the correct support. Pupils can also access mindfulness sessions and play therapy to support their well-being needs. Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points.

The school has high expectations of behaviour. Pupils rise to these expectations and demonstrate exemplary behaviour at all times. They are highly respectful to adults and considerate to each other. Pupils eagerly support each other and show great care for younger pupils. While a very few pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should, leaders do everything they possibly can to encourage them to attend. Leaders closely track pupils' attendance. They liaise proactively with external agencies to secure the right support for families.

Through the school's celebration of diversity, pupils develop a broad and deep appreciation of other cultures, faiths and communities. Pupils learn about democracy through the curriculum, their school leadership roles and visits from their local MP. They debate moral and social issues across subjects, including challenging stereotypes.

Staff feel that leaders, both at trust and school level prioritise their workload and well-being. They value the training opportunities provided. Trust leaders and local governors are rightly proud of the substantial improvement work driven by the headteacher.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' writing. They do not insist that pupils apply the grammar, punctuation and structural skills they already know in their writing. This means that pupils do not always convey their thinking with the accuracy and clarity they are capable of. Leaders must ensure that teachers set high expectations of writing and that pupils automatically apply their skills in all of their writing.

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	147878
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345522
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robin Taverner
CEO of the trust	Sean Tobin
Headteacher	Theresa Walker
Website	www.stmaryssw.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has undergone a significant change since the inspection of the predecessor school.
- The school is part of the Berlesduna Academy Trust.
- The school is a member of the Diocese of Chelmsford. The most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 took place in July 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due by July 2027.
- The school runs a before-school breakfast club.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the CEO of the trust, members of the board of trustees, members of the local governing body, a representative of the diocese, the local authority, and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions with curriculum leaders, visited samples of lessons accompanied by school leaders, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- 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 culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- A range of records relating to behaviour and attendance were reviewed.
- Consideration was given to the views of 43 parents through the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the 42 free-text responses. The views of staff were considered from meetings held with them and from the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Pupils' views were gathered from their responses to the Ofsted survey and from discussions with the inspectors.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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