

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School, Welham Green

Dellsome Lane, Welham Green, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL9 7NE

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and there are high expectations of behaviour. Children in the early years quickly develop a strong understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils say they are happy that behaviour has improved, and learning is rarely interrupted. Nevertheless, pupils are absent too often, meaning they miss much of their learning.

Recent developments to the curriculum have ensured the school is more focused on what it wants pupils to know. There are high expectations for what pupils can achieve. However, these changes are recent, meaning some pupils have fallen behind. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive the most appropriate support. This means that, on occasions, learning is too difficult for them, and they do not achieve as well as they could.

The school has developed a wide range of opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of life beyond St Mary's. Pupils, parents and carers are positive about this. Activities such as 'arts afternoon' and the 'mini police' visit help to enrich the curriculum. Pupils show respect for different cultures and religions. They trust adults to help them if they have any concerns.

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

Leaders have identified that pupils have not achieved as well as they could, as reflected in published key stage 2 outcomes. This has led the school to review and implement an updated curriculum. The school has been supported by the local authority. Governors have been involved in this process. They have introduced systems to check the progress of change rigorously. This helps improve the level of challenge that governors provide.

While the school now has an ambitious curriculum for Year 1 to Year 6, it will take time for pupils to be taught this content. In the early years, a range of opportunities within the provision are helping children develop positive learning habits. However, the school has not identified what children should know by the end of Reception. This means that staff are not clear what they are preparing children to know and do.

The school has ensured staff understand the curriculum content and have secure subject knowledge. They teach pupils new concepts clearly. However, in most subjects, the school has not considered how to help pupils to remember their learning through questioning and repetition. The school does not check what pupils have learned well enough, meaning that mistakes and misunderstandings are missed.

The school prioritises reading. Children in Reception begin learning phonics as soon as they join the school. The school regularly checks what pupils have learned. This helps the school to close gaps in early reading swiftly through carefully planned support. Staff have had appropriate training. This means they have the expertise they need to teach phonics precisely. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds they know. This helps them to read more fluently. Older pupils enjoy the reading curriculum that has been

introduced. They talk confidently about what they are reading. Opportunities such as the community book swap promote reading positively.

The school identifies pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Some of these pupils are well supported through careful adaptations to how the curriculum is taught. In these instances, the strategies are well matched to meet pupils' needs. However, this is not the case for some pupils with SEND. Occasionally, the curriculum is not suitably adapted. This means these pupils achieve less than they are capable of.

While there have been some small signs of improvement for individual pupils' attendance, too many pupils still do not attend regularly enough. This has a negative impact on their learning. Despite leaders taking action, this is not as swift and effective as it needs to be.

Pupils enjoy memorable opportunities outside of the classroom. For example, Year 4 pupils talk enthusiastically about their trips to museums in London. The school successfully promotes its values through pupil leadership roles, such as 'fish club', where selected pupils lead 'well-being Wednesday' sessions. 'Buddy' roles encourage older pupils to be positive role models for the youngest children. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. This gives pupils confidence in adults being able to support them if needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that pupils with SEND have appropriate adaptations to help them access the curriculum. This means that some pupils with SEND find lessons too difficult and are unable to learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that learning is appropriately adapted for all pupils with SEND.
- The school does not check pupils' understanding effectively. This means that pupils do not secure important knowledge and often have gaps in learning. The school should ensure that it uses appropriate approaches to checking pupils' knowledge so they secure the important knowledge they need.
- Pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should, and too many pupils are persistently absent. These pupils miss valuable learning and, as a result, have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should develop systems that lead to swift action when pupils are absent, supporting them to attend school more regularly.
- The school has not outlined what pupils should know by the end of Reception. This means that children are not being fully prepared for the next stage in their education. The school should review the curriculum for early years to ensure children have the important knowledge they need to begin Year 1 successfully.

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	117497
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345211
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	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sheila Hoile
Headteacher	Adrian Petty
Website	www.stmarys565.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to staffing. The headteacher joined the school in April 2022.
- The school does not use any alterative provision.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of St Albans. The last inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in December 2021.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority, the interim director of education from the diocese and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including science, history and art. Inspectors met with subject leaders, reviewed evidence of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, suspension and permanent exclusion records, attendance records, minutes of governing body meetings, school development plans, records of monitoring from the local authority and school policies.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online staff survey.

Inspection team

Emma Breckenridge, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Charlene Foster Ofsted Inspector

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