Inspection of a good school: St Catherine's C of E (VC) Primary School

Marlpool Lane, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 5HP

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Outcome

St Catherine's C of E (VC) Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and parents say lots of positive things about this school. They particularly like the friendly, approachable staff. Adults lead by example and pupils behave well. The school's motto of 'we learn together, using our heads and hearts' comes across clearly. Pupils like their school. They feel safe and secure throughout the day.

Pupils are not worried by bullying. If it ever happens, staff deal with it. Pupils are confident that anyone being unkind would be noticed and stopped. Everyone places a high value on respecting others. Adults teach pupils the importance of good manners and caring for others. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Everyone is able to concentrate on their work.

Leaders have planned a broad curriculum that enables pupils to succeed. Reading and mathematics are taught every day. For the most part, pupils make the progress that they should. Pupils do well in other subjects too. In addition, staff organise trips and special days that motivate and inspire pupils to learn new things.

During the pandemic, leaders improved the way they plan learning in different subjects. Currently, staff are working to embed these new changes.

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

This is a busy school where pupils do well. Academic attainment in English and mathematics is high and pupils are well prepared for secondary school. The wider curriculum also has strengths. Leaders have ambitious planning for staff to follow in different subjects. This is well thought through and identifies what is to be taught and when. In addition, teachers regularly revisit earlier learning to remind pupils about what they have been taught. Staff complete simple checks on what pupils know that help them to pitch lessons at the right level. In geography, for example, lessons often begin with a short quiz that prompts pupils to recall what they know about continents, countries, cities and how to use maps.

Overall, the curriculum has many strengths and staff have high expectations for all. However, the disruption caused by the pandemic has limited aspects of staff training. Because of this, there is some uneven practice in the school. Some aspects of the curriculum are not taught as well as they could be. Even so, most pupils can talk about what they have learned, and their books are full of tidy, quality work. In all year groups, pupils appear happy and interested in their schoolwork.

The school has a well-structured reading scheme in place. It ensures careful and logical progression in phonics when children first learn to read. Teachers in the early years use it consistently, and children respond very well. By the time they move into key stage 1, many are well ahead with their reading. Staff fuel their appetite for stories with plenty of high-quality books. However, in some cases, key stage 1 staff are too quick to remove reading routines and resources that a few pupils still need. This is not helpful and slows progress for some.

In mathematics, leaders have set out a well-sequenced curriculum. It highlights what needs to be taught and when. Beginning in the early years, effective teaching and daily practice develop and embed children's knowledge. These expectations continue across the school, and pupils do well.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by providing regular, precise teaching that meets their needs. At times, there is some challenging behaviour, but staff deal with it calmly. Leaders do all they can to make sure everyone is included. Learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

As well as learning in different subjects, staff teach pupils about how to be responsible, caring citizens. By holding elections for Eco and school councillors, pupils learn about democracy and representation. Furthermore, elected councillors help to steer projects through to completion. Through the school's 'Heart Smart' curriculum, pupils learn how to make healthy choices. Leaders and staff are rightly proud of their work to develop pupils' character, resilience and emotional health.

Staff say that leaders try their best to keep workload reasonable. They also say that leaders listen to their ideas and provide helpful support that enables them to do their job well.

Governors are well informed and understand their role. They routinely check information by talking to, and seeking the views of, staff, parents and pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure staff are up to date with training. They have effective systems for checking everyone is safe.

Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns. They like the class 'wellness wall', where they can post any worries. They know that their concerns are noticed, and staff act correctly when any concerns arise. Allegations of bullying or unsafe behaviour are dealt with properly.

Records of pupils' attendance and checks on staff include all the required information. Medicines are stored in the right places. Pupils are supervised throughout the school day and first-aid treatment is available if needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are sometimes too quick to relax formal structures and routines for supporting aspects of reading when children move up into key stage 1. Many pupils cope well with this, but some do not. Leaders should make sure that clearly structured and well-sequenced guidance and resources for the teaching of reading are implemented consistently by all staff in key stage 1.

- Leaders have detailed curriculum planning for staff to follow. For the most part, staff follow this. However, disruptions caused by the pandemic mean that some staff have not had enough training to support them in implementing this to best effect. Leaders should press on with their plans to ensure that all staff understand the updated curriculum planning and how best to use it in their classroom practice. They should do this so that all children learn as well as possible in all subjects.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2011.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135051
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10212419
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Tindall
Headteacher	Amanda Cope
Website	www.stcatherineskidderminster.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club at the beginning of the day. It does not use any alternative provision.
- St Catherine's Primary is a Church of England voluntary-controlled school. It received its last section 48 diocesan inspection of its effectiveness as a church school in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. In these subjects, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, pupils and staff, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. She also looked at some other subjects in less detail and spoke with staff and pupils about them.

- The lead inspector examined school documents. These included information about behaviour, school improvement planning, the curriculum and attendance. She also looked at the school's website.
- The lead inspector asked pupils, staff, leaders and governors about the schools safeguarding arrangements. She examined the record of employment checks on school staff, looked at other school records, and checked safety procedures at the school. She watched pupils' behaviour in class, assembly, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector had formal meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, staff and governors. She spoke on the telephone with a local authority adviser. She talked informally with pupils, staff and parents to gather information about school life. She considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for parents, pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Diane Pye, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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