Inspection of a good school: Swanage St Mark's Church of England Primary School

High Street, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2PH

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

Outcome

Swanage St Mark's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Rebecca Martin. The school is part of the Coastal Learning Partnership, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Paul Howieson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Louise Ellis.

What is it like to attend this school?

Swanage St Mark's is a happy, nurturing and vibrant school where pupils' well-being and personal development underpin everything. Children thrive when they join in the early years and, for the pupils who join the school at other times, staff ensure they quickly become settled. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They are polite, kind and respectful towards one another and staff. They have absolute confidence that staff will help them to learn well and will listen to them when they need support.

Pupils love reading. Children in Reception enjoy immersing themselves in books and listening to stories throughout the day. As pupils get older, they continue to read to adults almost every day. Listening to stories while enjoying toast is a highlight of many pupils' days. The curriculum is well planned. Staff are knowledgeable and pupils enjoy their lessons.

Pupils feel part of their wider community. They are proud of their school and are motivated to learn. They enjoy a wide range of additional activities on offer. The school is proud of its commitment to competitive sports, for example. The school works effectively with families and other community groups to enable pupils to develop their talents and interests.

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

The school has thought carefully about what pupils need to know in each subject. It has broken this knowledge down and has clear expectations about how staff should teach pupils so that pupils know more and remember more. For example, teachers help pupils to recall prior learning using 'flashbacks' before teaching new knowledge. This is mostly

effective. In addition, staff check pupils' learning over time. This enables the school to accurately identify where pupils have gaps in their understanding. Occasionally, the activities pupils complete are not precisely matched to content in the curriculum and what leaders intend pupils to learn. The oversight of some parts of the curriculum is not as strong as in others.

The school's published outcomes last year were low in some areas. The school has responded robustly. The impact of the school's actions is evident in how well current pupils learn reading, writing and mathematics. Additionally, the school's work to tackle poor attendance, a factor linked to previous weaker attainment, has been successful. Significant improvement has been made in this area.

The school has effective systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These children are well supported and receive additional help, if needed. Staff confidently adapt learning in lessons, if appropriate. Pupils who speak English as an additional language thrive at this school. This is, in part, as a result of the highly effective phonics provision, which enables these pupils, and others, to learn to read quickly and to develop a love of books.

Children in the early years enjoy their phonics lessons, rapidly learning the routines and actions that help them to match letters to sounds. Older pupils who are at the early stages of reading regularly read books matched to the sounds they know. Staff know pupils individually and work relentlessly to ensure all pupils can read well.

The learning environment in the school is purposeful and inviting. Children in Reception learn and play for extended periods because every activity has been carefully planned. They use equipment respectfully and talk to one another about their learning. Staff consistently use language to model conversation and build on children's growing understanding of the world around them. The early years provision is a strength of the school.

Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. If pupils are struggling, staff provide exemplary pastoral support to ensure children are ready to learn. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for. Additionally, pupils are supportive of one another if they do not meet the school's high expectations. They are forgiving and learn from their mistakes. Their understanding of British values shines through in their behaviour.

Nearly all pupils take part in additional clubs and activities, including cookery, Eco Club and an array of sports. There are many opportunities to become pupil leaders and to represent the school. Staff work tenaciously to make links with sports coaches and other organisations to widen access to art, music and sport for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and recognise risks, including online.

The school has faced a number of challenges within its community. With support from the trust and local governors, staff have maintained a tireless focus on the pupils and continue to provide a good quality of education. They are outward-facing and reflective, so continue to refine the curriculum and drive improvement where 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 implementation of the curriculum in a few areas is less effective than in others. For example, activity choices are not always closely matched to the intended learning outcome, or challenging reading is not always appropriately scaffolded. This means that pupils do not always learn what has been identified in the curriculum. The trust must ensure that leadership at all levels is able to check the effectiveness of the curriculum so all pupils learn what is intended.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2018.

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	142165
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10313298
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	140
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise Ellis
CEO of the trust	Paul Howieson
Headteacher	Rebecca Martin
Website	www.stmarksswanage.dorset.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is designated as having a religious character. The school is in the Diocese of Salisbury. At the most recent section 48 inspection of the school, carried out in March 2019, the school was judged to be excellent.
- The school has been part of Coastal Learning Partnership, a multi-academy trust, since March 2020.
- The school does not use any 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector also looked at pupils' writing and work in the wider curriculum.
- The inspector analysed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector also considered the responses of staff to Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and discussed how pupils with SEND are identified and supported.
- The inspector met with staff who oversee the personal development and behaviour of pupils.
- The inspector met with members of the local governing body and the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Victoria Griffin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024