

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's Catholic School, Penzance

Peverell Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2AT

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 December 2024

## Outcome

St Mary's Catholic School, Penzance has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Vanessa Bingham. This school is part of Plymouth CAST, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Zoe Batten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ruth O'Donovan.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know the school rules of 'be ready, respectful and safe' well. These thread through their actions and learning. Staff build warm and supportive relationships with pupils. The kindness and friendships that develop in the early years continue throughout the school. Consequently, pupils feel safe and valued.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils know what they need to learn and embrace mistakes as a learning opportunity. Pupils make rapid gains, often from very low starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well.

Most pupils behave sensibly in classrooms and around the school. Pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their feelings and behaviour receive individual help from staff. Playtimes are calm and safe. Pupils enjoy the range of equipment, such as basketballs and hula hoops, that they select from the 'huff puff' container.

Pupils are proud of the positions of leadership they hold in the school. The GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) team take part in litter picks and make Christmas cards to send to members of the local residential care home.

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

The school has designed a broad and balanced curriculum. In most subjects, it has identified the important knowledge and skills it wants all pupils to learn. For example, in mathematics, children in the Reception Year learn how to make pairs of numbers through learning activities planned for them. Older pupils build on this and use their knowledge of numbers to solve problems with fractions. In English, pupils develop and practise writing so that by Year 6, they understand different literary forms and styles. However, in some subjects, the school is refining its curriculum thinking. In a few wider curriculum subjects, the school has not identified the key knowledge pupils need to learn. In these subjects, pupils have gaps in what they know and remember.

Children in the Nursery Year recognise different types of sounds through familiar games. In the Reception Year, children learn the sounds that letters make and read books that match the sounds they know. High-quality phonics sessions continue so that by the end of Year 1, the number of pupils who succeed in the phonics screening check is above the national average. Staff provide individual support for pupils who struggle with reading, helping them to catch up. The school also promotes a strong love of reading. Older pupils speak fondly of visits to the library and new books they can read and enjoy.

In most subjects, teachers deliver the curriculum efficiently, which results in pupils remembering what they need to know. Staff identify and meet pupils' additional needs, including those with SEND. Teachers mostly check pupils' understanding carefully and respond to misconceptions quickly. However, in a few subjects, checks that staff make on pupils' learning do not routinely identify whether pupils have learned the curriculum as intended. Therefore, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

This academic year, attendance has improved because of the support the school provides to families. The school carefully tracks absence and identifies those pupils who struggle to attend. Its initiatives to improve pupils' attendance are having a positive impact on reducing persistent absence.

The school is proud of the high-quality personal development offer. Pupils learn about online safety, healthy relationships and how their bodies change as they get older. Through their learning about the Windrush generation and the Bristol Bus Boycott, they know that discrimination is wrong and the importance of respecting cultures and religions. The school prioritises specific 'life experiences' for each year group. Trips to the cinema, learning an instrument or surfing at a local beach broaden pupils' awareness. Clubs like hockey, tag rugby and choir develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils are proud to represent the school in a range of tournaments. Residential visits help pupils to develop their independence and resilience.

Staff appreciate the strong professional development to improve their leadership and teaching. The local governing body and trust leaders support and challenge the school to continue to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Most parents and carers are happy with the school and would recommend it to others.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The key knowledge the school wants pupils to learn in some wider curriculum subjects is not precisely identified. This means that, in those few subjects, some pupils have gaps in what they know and remember. The school needs to ensure that in all subjects, pupils have access to an ambitious curriculum that helps them to build a rich body of knowledge and achieve highly.
- In a few subjects, checks that staff make on pupils' learning do not identify whether pupils have learned the curriculum as intended. As a result, some pupils continue in their learning with gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that assessment is used consistently in order to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and inform subsequent teaching.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in October 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140778
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10334708
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	156
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Ruth O'Donovan
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Zoe Batten
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vanessa Bingham (interim headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marys-rc-pz.cornwall.sch.uk">www.st-marys-rc-pz.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	2 and 3 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The interim headteacher took up their post in September 2024.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Plymouth. It received a section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in November 2018. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place this academic year.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, parents, pupils, members of the local governing body and representatives from the trust.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

Gavin Summerfield, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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