

Inspection of a good school: St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, Chandlers Ford

Hillcrest Avenue, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO53 2JP

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 November 2023

Outcome

St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, Chandlers Ford continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents are spot on when they say: 'Great environment, fantastic staff and great values taught to the pupils.' The simple but powerful core values of 'ready, respect and kind' permeate school life. Expectations of pupils are high, recognising and celebrating attitudes and actions that go 'over and above' the minimum.

From Reception upwards, pupils rise to adults' expectations. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively. They enjoy learning new knowledge and the feeling of success they get from understanding facts or mastering a new skill. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics and have accumulated secure knowledge in a range of other subjects.

St Swithun Wells is like a window on the world. Pupils and their families come from many different countries. As another parent wrote: 'The school is very welcoming to all, and the diversity of pupils and families in the school gives all children broader insight and knowledge.' Pupils develop a healthy respect for difference. They appreciate the care and kindness of staff and extend these values to each other. School councillors give pupils a voice in school matters. Others contribute to leading worship as members of the 'GIFT' team.

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

In the words of one parent: 'The school is a supportive environment, and it cares about the whole child, not just ticking the boxes'. The world map near the entrance celebrating families' home countries and cultures is testament to the inclusive ethos. Parents are encouraged to speak their first languages at home, to develop their child's speaking and listening skills and to help them make sense of what they are learning. Staff use effective strategies to provide in-class support for pupils who speak English as an additional

language (EAL). 'Young interpreters' partner with new arrivals to help them settle in and learn English.

The commitment to pupils' all-round development and nurturing their readiness to learn is undeniable. Pupils are taught to understand important matters like healthy relationships and their place in the world. Activities such as 'Parliament week' bring real life into the classroom, and a range of clubs offer the chance to try different activities. Home visits before children start Reception are used to get to know their interests and needs. The same care is taken to get to know any new pupil or when barriers to learning start to emerge. Leaders are diligent in pinpointing exactly what any additional needs are. They ensure that individual support plans are personalised and that staff understand how to help pupils in class. Where needed, additional activities are targeted to enhance pupils' vocabulary and widen their experiences. The recently introduced 'Squirrel School' provides an important space for pupils who find being in class all day difficult, enabling them to learn in a different environment.

Learning to read and loving to read underpin pupils' success across the curriculum. Staff kickstart an enthusiasm for books during home visits. They take a selection for children to choose from and give them their very own book bag to proudly bring it back to school. Teaching early reading skills begins as soon as children start in Reception. Staff are well trained, so the phonics programme is delivered skilfully and accurately. They constantly look and listen to check that pupils are grasping the sounds letters make and how to write them, providing a boost where needed. Pupils quickly start to see themselves as readers as they have a taste of their own success when practising the sounds they are learning, using carefully matched books. Those who do not learn to read as quickly as their classmates benefit from tailored support. Pupils who joined the school with no or very little English flourish as readers over time.

The mathematics programme is equally well structured and precisely taught so that pupils' knowledge and skills build from Reception upwards. Any additional needs are met by consolidating pupils' understanding of facts and methods before moving on. In other subjects, the progression of knowledge and skills is set out, but leaders are working through a rolling programme of reviewing and refining the content. They want to ensure that the journey from early years into Year 1 and beyond is consistently clear. The school has not, however, made as much headway as it wanted due to staff changes. That said, the school is ensuring that pupils continue to learn in the interim by keeping watch on what is happening in classrooms and trialling a new assessment approach. Subject leaders are benefiting from well-planned professional development opportunities. They are being supported to check pupils' learning across the school through well-spaced 'subject cascades'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff turnover has meant many changes to subject leadership. This has hindered the planned pace of change to refine the curriculum. The school needs to continue to develop new leaders in their role so that they all have a clear picture of the current position of their subject and understand what needs to be even better.
- Because some subjects are yet to benefit from a revamp, guidance for staff about the progression of knowledge and skills is not always as helpful as it might be. It is not always clear what prior learning they should be building on. In continuing its review of the curriculum, the school should agree precisely what pupils should know and retain at key points from the start of Reception to the end of Year 6.

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	116383
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10287901
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	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Casey (co-chair) Chris Williams (co-chair)
Headteacher	Anne-Marie Jordan
Website	http://www.st-swithunwells.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher joined the school in April 2021. The inclusion lead was appointed to her post since the last inspection. Most teachers have joined the school since the last inspection, some very recently.
- The co-chairs of governors were new to the school and to their roles at the beginning of the last school year. A number of other governors have also only recently joined the school.
- Over half of pupils speak EAL, representing more than 20 different languages. Some of these pupils have only arrived very recently in the country and speak little or no English.
- The proportion of pupils who leave and join the school over the course of a year is greater than seen nationally.
- The school's religious character is inspected separately. The last section 48 inspection took place in 2019. The next one is due by 2027.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school provision, known as TAZ. This was considered as part of this inspection.
- The school does not currently 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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and inclusion leader. The inspector also met with the EAL and early years leads, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority and diocese.
- 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, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult and considered the school's plans in other subjects.
- The views of pupils, staff and parents were gathered using Ofsted's surveys. The inspector also met with pupils and staff during the inspection. They talked to pupils while observing break and lunchtimes and with staff as they went about their work.
- 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.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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