Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Hadleigh

Stonehouse Road, Hadleigh, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 5BH

Inspection date: 7 May 2025

Outcome

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Hadleigh has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Jane Stalham. The school is part of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tracey Caffull, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Blit. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and welcoming school. Pupils feel valued and receive the care they need to be successful. The school's nurturing environment builds pupils' confidence and encourages them to take risks and explore new ideas. Pupils know that if they need help, someone is always there to support them.

Pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum that is tailored to their needs. In most subjects, staff set clear routines and high expectations to help pupils succeed. Pupils enjoy discussing new learning, using the specialist language and vocabulary that teachers explicitly teach and revisit. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils understand the importance of respect. In the early years, children learn to communicate and express their feelings. They take turns and listen to one another. Pupils appreciate the recent changes to the behaviour policy. They understand their role in making the school a positive and orderly place to learn.

Pupils know how to stay safe online and in their community. Pupils can play an active role in the school. Many represent their school in local and national events. Older pupils take on leadership roles such as house captains, school councillors and librarians. They fulfil their responsibilities with dedication and pride.

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

In many subjects, including English and mathematics, the school uses an effective and consistent approach to teach the curriculum. Staff use familiar routines that give pupils opportunities to practise using important knowledge and apply new learning. As a result, pupils achieve well overall.

Staff check pupils' understanding to identify any gaps in learning or misconceptions. This helps to establish if pupils are making progress through the curriculum. Staff provide tailored support to address any gaps in knowledge or barriers to learning. The school is equally as effective at identifying the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When needed, teachers adjust their teaching to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum and learn successfully.

In the Nursery, staff build strong foundations for children's future learning, particularly in their reading and language development. Staff develop children's vocabulary and create opportunities for them to explore and broaden their understanding of the world. Staff teach children how to communicate well so they can express their wants and needs clearly.

As soon as they start Reception, children build on their reading knowledge through the school's structured phonics programme. Staff check pupils' understanding to identify gaps, offering frequent opportunities for them to secure their phonics knowledge. Pupils apply this knowledge in their writing. Staff carefully select books that match the sounds pupils learn, ensuring that most pupils learn to read confidently and fluently. Older pupils discuss the books and authors they have read. They enjoy relaxed reading sessions. These moments encourage pupils to explore literature, share insights and read for pleasure. Through reading, pupils are encouraged to develop the depth of their understanding and knowledge across the curriculum.

In many subjects, pupils have ample opportunities to practise new skills. This helps them build a strong foundation before tackling more difficult topics. However, curriculum improvements are more recent in some other subjects. Leaders are still developing ways to check how well the curriculum is taught in these subjects. Teaching is not always as highly effective in these subjects as it is in others. Although staff follow the planned curriculum, pupils achieve different standards because some content is not taught as well as it could be. As a result, some pupils struggle to build a secure understanding in these subjects.

Recent changes to the behaviour policy have had a positive impact. Pupils understand the expectations of how they should behave. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently, praising pupils for demonstrating the school's values. Pupils show empathy and appreciation for one another, celebrating both their own and each other's successes.

The school has planned ways to support pupils' broader development carefully. The trust 'passport' offers pupils a wide range of enriching opportunities before they leave school. These include growing vegetables, joining the local library and visiting a museum. Pupils

develop an understanding of life beyond their local community. Pupils get the support they need to be ready and able to learn. The school supports improvements in pupils' attendance by working with families effectively.

Leaders know the school well. Their ambitious improvement plans are focused on what will make the biggest difference for pupils. Staff value the training opportunities provided and improvements to their workload. They recognise the positive impact the changes implemented have on pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school is eager to continue to further develop and improve the curriculum to ensure pupils receive the best possible education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the school is still developing how it checks the quality of teaching. Teaching in these subjects is not always consistent, and some content is not taught as well as it could be. As a result, some pupils do not develop a secure understanding in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively and consistently well in all subjects.

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 February 2020.

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	142597
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10378544
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Blit
CEO of the trust	Tracey Caffull
Headteacher	Jane Stalham (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.stmaryshad.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust. The school's last inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in March 2025.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The executive headteacher has been in post since April 2025 and is also the executive headteacher of another school in the trust.

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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher, the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, the head of professional development for the trust, the CEO and members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at social times.
- 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.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Oriana Dalton, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Vicki Webber	Ofsted Inspector

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