Inspection of St Mark's CofE Academy

Shop, Morwenstow, Bude Cornwall EX23 9PE

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 June 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Deirdre Petersen. This school is part of the Learning Academy Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tracey Cleverly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanne Tisdale.

What is it like to attend this school?

Strong and respectful relationships are at the heart of St Mark's CofE Academy. These are underpinned by the school's distinctive vision of 'Flourishing futures through respect, love and hope'. Pupils demonstrate a high level of care for one another. They attend well and value the friendships that they form at this small school. Pupils are happy and safe. They have confidence that staff will help them if they have any worries.

The school is ambitious for what its pupils can achieve, both academically and in their wider development. Pupils meet the school's high expectations. They are motivated to do their best. The nursery provides a nurturing environment. Children learn routines in preparation for starting school.

Pupils take part in a variety of enrichment activities. These are carefully planned to support and build on areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils visit coastal locations to deepen their understanding of science and geography.

Pupils value highly the recently strengthened range of opportunities afforded to them by the school. Pupils develop new skills and talents through a wide variety of opportunities, such as sporting events. Older pupils welcome the opportunity to support younger children at lunchtimes. This helps them to develop a sense of responsibility.

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

New leaders, with support of the trust, have overhauled the curriculum. It is now well designed, ambitious and interesting. In most subjects, the way that the curriculum is taught helps pupils to know and remember more. For example, pupils use their geographical knowledge to further their understanding of economic trade. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not taught in a way that supports pupils to develop their subject knowledge coherently. Consequently, some pupils do not reach the intended curriculum goals.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. Pupils have opportunities to revisit learning. This helps them to know and remember more over time. However, what is known about pupils' learning is not routinely used to adapt the delivery of the curriculum with precision. As a result, some pupils develop gaps in their learning and do not build securely on what they know.

The school has placed communication and language development at the heart of the curriculum. In the early years, staff encourage children to use the correct vocabulary to express themselves. Staff get to know children as individuals. They use this knowledge to tailor learning. Staff build rapidly on what children know.

The school has placed a sharp focus on reading. Children in the Nursery Year enjoy listening to stories and joining in with well-known rhymes. Children start to learn to read as soon as they begin the Reception Year. Books match the phonics sounds that they know. There is precise support in place for pupils who fall behind to catch up rapidly with

their peers. Pupils read with interest and become confident, fluent readers. They value 'book club' as an opportunity to make book recommendations to their peers.

The school quickly and accurately identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has strengthened the precision of personalised targets and goals to ensure that they accurately meet pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND achieve well and play an active part in the wider school life. Parents of pupils with SEND wholeheartedly agree.

The school places great importance on pupils' regular attendance and punctuality. Pupils' attendance is frequently analysed to gain an understanding of the causes of any absence. The school takes swift action to support families if their child's attendance starts to decrease. The school's actions have resulted in sustained improvements in pupils' attendance. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. There is no low-level disruption in lessons. This means that pupils learn without interruption.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is well considered. Pupils learn how to look after their health and mental well-being. They know how to keep safe, including when online. From the early years onwards, children learn about how to work with others collaboratively, reinforcing the family feel of the school.

The trust and school leaders have an accurate picture of the school through robust systems for quality assurance. They check that the school's actions are having a positive impact on all pupils. The trust works closely with the local ethos and advisory committee to gain a clear understanding of the views of pupils, staff, parents and the local community. Staff are positive about the guidance they receive to hone their practice. They appreciate how leaders are mindful of the impact on workload.

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 subjects, the way in which the curriculum is taught does not support pupils to build their knowledge as securely as they could. This means some pupils do not reach intended curriculum goals. The school should ensure that all staff have the subject and pedagogical knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum securely.
- In some subjects, what is known about pupils' learning is not always used to make the necessary curriculum adaptions. Therefore, gaps in learning are not always rectified swiftly. The school should ensure that assessment strategies are used to inform teaching so that it supports pupils to build their knowledge cumulatively in all subjects.

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	149497
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10379004
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanne Tisdale
CEO of the trust	Tracey Cleverly
Headteacher	Deirdre Petersen
Website	www.stmarks-lap.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Learning Academy Partnership.
- The school has a nursery school for two-, three- and four-year-old children.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school runs a pre-school and an after-school club.
- This is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2023.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the SEND coordinator, the CEO, the deputy CEO, the director of vulnerable pupils and inclusion, the representative of the chair of the board of trustees, other trustees and members of the ethos and advisory committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- 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 the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Liz Geller, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Cameron Lancaster	Ofsted Inspector

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