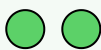


St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Address: Dunstable Road, Caddington, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU1 4BB

Unique reference number (URN): 145324

Inspection report: 7 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

The school works closely with families to improve the attendance of its pupils. This, coupled with continuous work around the importance of attending regularly, has led to rapid improvements. Leaders monitor attendance effectively with sharp focus and oversight. The school works with outside agencies and the trust to ensure its approaches to attendance, and actions taken to ensure it is prioritised, are prompt and effective. Leaders' work in developing a whole-school approach and making attendance a priority for all continues to have an impact. This approach ensures that pupils attend well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils and their behaviour at school. As a result, pupils are clear about the expectations of staff and why it is important to display the school's virtues. Pupils are focused and respectful in class and at social times.

Pupils are supported to manage their behaviour by compassionate and kind staff. If they need help or reminding about behaviour, they get the required support quickly and easily. Leaders have introduced a comprehensive curriculum for behaviour. This outlines how it should be responded to. This means that pupils are clear about consequences and rewards.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children in the early years flourish. Leaders have planned a carefully considered curriculum to prepare children for the next stage in their learning. This curriculum develops children's core skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Parents and carers value the effective communication with staff and leaders to help their children thrive. Consequently, children leave the early years with the skills necessary for a positive start to the key stage 1 curriculum.

Leaders and staff use effective interactions and purposeful activities to frame children's learning. They take the time to ensure that language is enriched so that all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make accelerated progress. Children enjoy spending time in the well-equipped outdoor spaces talking about what they are learning. For example, children talk about the shiny treasure they have found and how they are going to use tools to build a house. They remodel the warm and purposeful interactions that they have with adults.

Children freely choose the reading and writing activities that they wish to access. They write words and phrases accurately that they have seen around the classroom.

Children benefit from well-established routines and learning that prepare them well for their transition to key stage 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders and staff have a profound knowledge of the school's context. This enables them to support pupils and overcome barriers to learning. Leaders' inclusive and caring ethos is

shared by all stakeholders.

Leaders and staff put the needs of children and their individual circumstances at the forefront of their decision-making. This enables them to support pupils and develop effective ways to overcome barriers to learning. This includes effective use of additional funding to provide further mentoring and interventions, which helps provide any additional adaptations that pupils may need. Leaders monitor and review the support on offer. This ensures that it is effective and having the desired impact. This reflective attitude ensures that pupils are well included and supported.

The school works effectively with other professionals to help pupils. This outward-looking approach means that external support is called upon and put in place where necessary.

Staff receive high-quality training. This enables them to put in place effective interventions and support their pupils well. This, alongside warm relationships with staff, has a positive impact on pupils and how they achieve.

Leaders use the pupil premium funding to support vulnerable pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This allows them to participate fully, receive support and benefit from school life.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders have prioritised the right areas of the school to develop. Leaders and those responsible for governance have a robust knowledge of the school and the cohort that it serves. This means that they respond quickly and effectively to its emerging needs and vary their offer accordingly. Decisions are made collaboratively to ensure that pupils achieve well and are supported to thrive.

Leaders ensure that staff feel valued and supported. Their workload and wellbeing are thoughtfully managed and considered. The school prioritises the professional development of its staff. This is through a tiered approach alongside collaborative working with the trust, school leaders and external professionals. Leaders are proactive in facilitating opportunities to develop staff through externally validated courses and reflective opportunities. This approach means that pupils benefit from well-trained and developed staff. Changes are implemented thoughtfully and considerately, such as the school's work in phonics and mathematics.

Leaders, those responsible for governance and the trust work collaboratively in a culture of professional challenge. They are clear on the school's strategic vision, ethos and virtues. This has resulted in a culture of high expectations for pupils and staff.

Staff, including early career teachers, are proud of their school. They are positive about the changes that leaders have implemented. They feel valued and consulted about decisions.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are at the heart of this school's approach. Leaders have developed a contextual and values-driven offer. It is carefully considered

alongside the school's virtues and community. It enables pupils to become tolerant and respectful citizens. This is as a result of a thoughtfully considered personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and the offer beyond the academic curriculum.

Pupils can articulate the importance of fundamental British values. This is reflected in the positive culture in lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of different faiths, in addition to showing respect for people who have different beliefs to their own.

Pupils feel engaged in shaping their school community. This is achieved through a wide variety of student leadership opportunities, including the school council, faith ambassadors, prayer pals and mentoring schemes. Pupils are actively engaged in supporting the local community through fundraisers and opportunities to visit local farms and parks. Consequently, pupils have a strong sense of cohesion and moral values.

Pupils understand topics that they cover in their PSHE lessons. They are clear about how the curriculum helps them develop skills to stay safe in school and online. They understand how to recognise the age-appropriate signs of bullying and abuse and how to report them. Pupils also recognise the importance of healthy relationships and the value of being a good friend.

The school offers a wide range of pastoral support to its pupils. This is regularly monitored to ensure that it is having the desired impact. Pupils understand how to stay healthy, both physically and mentally.

Opportunities beyond the curriculum are vast. These include the award-winning outdoor spaces, clubs and residential trips. These opportunities all help build resilience and self-confidence. Leaders monitor participation in these activities so that all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefit from them.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Pupils achieve well. Their outcomes in national tests at the end of Year 6 are typically close to national averages. Leaders have prioritised the improvement of their phonics provision alongside external support. This has had a positive impact on outcomes in this area. Leaders are reflective. They continually review their provision in core areas such as English, mathematics and science to ensure that it allows pupils to achieve well.

Pupils progress through the curriculum confidently. This is evident in the quality of the written work that they produce. However, this work can sometimes show misconceptions that are not addressed. This means that pupils occasionally repeat minor errors over time.

Pupils talk proudly about the achievements that they make. They are well prepared for the next stages of learning. Staff adapt their practice for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Leaders have devised a curriculum tailored to the needs of their cohort. They have refined their work in this area to ensure that it is broad, balanced and ambitious. This has had a positive impact on pupils. Staff break learning into manageable chunks. They use this alongside their secure subject knowledge to ensure that learning is easy for pupils to understand. As a result, pupils are guided through learning in a supportive way. Teachers make effective use of recall tasks and consolidation activities to ensure that new learning is reinforced. This also allows pupils to justify and extend their answers. Teachers provide opportunities for deeper thinking and reflection.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that all pupils benefit from its approach. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils benefit from the 'rainbow room' which ensures that those who need additional support can access it quickly, easily and discreetly. Leaders have also introduced mentoring and support opportunities. This means that pupils are helped with more complex aspects of learning through effective interventions. Consequently, barriers to learning are removed.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to attend this school. Pupils and their families benefit from strong and trusting relationships with staff. They speak kindly about the adults who support them. This creates a strong sense of community that is evident across all areas of the school's work. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure in their learning. They greet each other warmly with smiles and friendly interactions. Pupils display a sense of pride in their school. They benefit from high-quality outdoor facilities such as a tennis court, playhouses and a running track. They enjoy these while interacting harmoniously at breaktime. These positive interactions and opportunities mean that pupils behave well. They value the restorative approach to behaviour modelled by staff and the warmth they are shown.

Pupils achieve well. This is because of the depth and precision in the planning of the ambitious curriculum. It enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to build their knowledge and skills progressively and securely. Consequently, they develop a secure foundation of core knowledge and skills. They are well equipped for the next stages in their education and future lives.

The school's high expectations of behaviour and conduct are established in the early years. Children act kindly and respectfully towards each other through well-embedded routines. This positive behaviour continues throughout the school. Pupils can talk confidently about the school's behaviour curriculum and how it positively impacts their lives at school.

Pupils benefit from a meticulously planned programme of personal development and wellbeing. This enables them to be active, caring and responsible citizens in the diverse

local community. Pupils also value the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer, including visits to local zoos, theme parks and farms.

Next steps

- Leaders should now ensure that misconceptions in pupils' work are recognised and acted upon so that they are rectified over time.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of the Saint Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mark McLaughlin, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jerzy Brzyski.

This school is registered as having a Catholic religious character. As the school is designated as having a religious character, it is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The most recent section 48 inspection of this school took place in June 2024.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, chief executive officer (CEO), director of education, trustees, the local governing body and other school leaders during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a nursery, including provision for 2-year-olds.

The school is federated with another local school within the trust.

Amanda Dowling: Headteacher

Lead inspector:

Ross Marks, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Lucille Pollard, Ofsted Inspector

Danny Wagstaff, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 7 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

240

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

27.66%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

4.58%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

18.75%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	62%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	61%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	79%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	75%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	71%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	74%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	79%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	43%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	44%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	29%	44%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	71%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	52%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	43%	58%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	57%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	56%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	43%	59%	Below

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	43%	68%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	44%	69%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	29%	66%	-38 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	81%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	71%	78%	-7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	52%	78%	-25 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	78%	-23 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	43%	77%	-35 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	57%	80%	-23 pp
2024/25 (final)	56%	81%	-25 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	43%	79%	-36 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been

mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.3%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.2%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.7%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	11.0%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	13.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	23.0%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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