

Inspection of St Mary's Community Nursery School

Old Wrexham Road, Handbridge, Chester, Cheshire CH4 7HS

Inspection dates: 4–5 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's Nursery is a caring school that welcomes all children. Leaders and staff make sure that children feel safe and secure. Staff develop positive relationships with children. They provide many opportunities for children to develop their independence and confidence. Children are encouraged to put on their own coats and decide which activities they would like to explore. They settle quickly into the routines of school life.

Children behave well. They are polite and well-mannered. Children happily take turns, share resources and are kind and caring to each other. Staff make sure that children are all protected from bullying. They teach children to be kind to each other. We saw no evidence of bullying during the inspection.

Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. They hold staff in high regard. They say that staff always have time to greet them and to listen to them, if they have any concerns. Parents say that their children are safe and well cared for.

In some areas of learning, leaders and staff do not have high enough expectations of what some children can achieve. Activities planned do not routinely build on what children already know and can do. As a result, some children do not achieve to their potential.

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

Leaders are managing a period of unavoidable turbulence sensitively. The school is currently under consultation to close. This has had and is having an impact on parents, staff and the local community. Leaders are aware that this has slowed down the improvements that they needed to make since the last inspection in January 2019.

Children at St Mary's are happy. They enjoy learning and behave well. Poor behaviour rarely disrupts children's learning. The classrooms are stimulating and well-resourced. Staff plan activities that help children to learn. However, this is not as strong in the outdoor areas.

The curriculum ensures that children learn across all seven areas of learning. In some of these areas, leaders have thought carefully about the order in which children develop their skills and knowledge. This helps children to know more and remember more. In some other areas of learning, leaders are new to their roles. They have weak subject knowledge and are not clear how to check the quality of the curriculum in their area of responsibility. As a result, staff do not routinely plan activities that build on what children already know and can do.

Although children are ready for their transition into Reception, some staff's low expectations mean that some children do not achieve to their best. However,

children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and achieve well. Leaders have made sure that there are strong systems in place to support these children.

Since the last inspection, leaders have placed reading at the heart of the curriculum. From when children start at the school they have lots of opportunities to read books that they like. They enjoy reading on their own and with friends and listening to their favourite stories. Children handle books with care and turn the pages correctly.

Staff plan some opportunities to develop children's early language development. They also provide support to any child who needs extra help to catch up. However, staff have not had the training that they need to fully support children's early reading. As a result, the subject knowledge of some staff is variable.

Children enjoy learning mathematics. They learn to count and to recognise shapes. Staff make sure that children have opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in their play. Children enjoy hunting for shapes outside, throwing beanbags into hoops and singing number songs.

The curriculum provides many activities for children to develop their understanding of the world. For example, during the inspection, children were encouraged to explore the outside area to find natural objects to make a collage. They also enjoy visiting the local woodland area, where they hunt for minibeasts and make their own dens.

Leaders have made sure that children have many opportunities to develop personally. They take part in trips and visits in their local community. They enjoy walking to the shop with their shopping lists and buying the snacks for the school. Staff also plan activities that help children to learn about different faiths and cultures. Staff involve children in raising money for different charities and helping them to understand why this is important.

Parents are invited into school to see what their children have been learning and also to read stories in their home language. Parents feel welcome in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have provided staff with safeguarding training. This helps staff to be vigilant for signs of harm to children. Most staff have a good understanding about the risks children may face. They know how to spot children who may be vulnerable and who they should report their concerns to. Designated staff are swift to work with other agencies, where necessary.

However, some aspects of safeguarding policies and procedures are not as tight as they should be. Despite training, a small number of staff are not clear enough about their safeguarding responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum leaders are new to their roles. They do not have a strong enough knowledge of their subjects. As a result, they do not have the skills necessary to make the improvements required in their areas of responsibility. Leaders need to provide support and training, so that all subject leaders have the capacity to improve the quality of education in the subjects they lead.
- The outdoor learning environment is not used effectively for children to focus on their learning. This means that children are not able to make the most of their curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the activities and resources available outdoors are improved so that children have access to high-quality and purposeful learning experiences.
- Sometimes, staff expectations of children are not high enough. This means that some children do not do as well as they could. Leaders and staff need to make sure that activities are planned which build on what children have learned in the past. This will make sure that they know more and remember more and achieve to their potential.
- Staff subject knowledge of early reading is variable. This means that they do not provide enough opportunities to develop children's early language development. Leaders need to provide training and support for staff so that children are well prepared to become early readers in Reception.
- Procedures, policies and checks with regard to safeguarding practices are not as tight as they should be. As a result, some staff are not clear about their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Leaders, including governors, should ensure that safeguarding policies and practices are further strengthened.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110955
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10122011
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Roe
Headteacher	Katie Tyrie
Website	www.stmarysnurserychester.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a range of full-time and part-time places for three- and four-year-olds.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school is currently under review to close in January 2021.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, governors and staff.
- We spoke with parents during the day.
- We looked at examples of children's work and spoke with children when visiting lessons.
- We listened to children read.

- We reviewed safeguarding documentation, considered how this relates to daily practice and spoke with staff.
- The inspection focused deeply on reading; mathematics; personal, social, and emotional development; and knowledge and understanding of the world. This entailed discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of children's work and discussions with teachers and with children.
- We took into consideration the five responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maria McGarry

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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