

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Knutton St Marys CofE Academy

Church Lane, Knutton, Newcastle Under Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 6EB

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Carly Wright. This school is part of St Bart's Multi-Academy 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), Lisa Sarikaya, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Johnny Anderson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Knutton St Marys has experienced turbulence in leadership over the past few years. This is now stable. The school has begun to raise its expectations of what pupils can achieve. Improvements have been identified, and while work to achieve this has begun, it is in the early stages.

This is a warm and friendly school where everyone is treated equally. The school has re-established its values of forgiveness, generosity, respect, kindness and peace. Staff and pupils live out these values. The school has recently improved its management of pupils' behaviour. Staff set high expectations for how pupils should behave. Vulnerable pupils receive support to help them to stay calm so that they can learn. Pupils behave well at playtimes. During lessons, most pupils listen and work hard. They feel happy and safe.

The school has recently introduced a range of inclusive extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' learning beyond the curriculum. These include dodgeball, dance and karaoke. The curriculum is enriched through a range of visits. For example, pupils went to a farm to learn about animals and to a theatre to watch a pantomime. Pupils learn about how to stay physically healthy. They take part in competitive sports, such as curling and archery.

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

Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have been too low over time, but they are slowly beginning to improve. The school has started to address most of the areas in need of development. Due to staffing changes, some of these improvements have only begun recently.

The curriculum has been revised so that most subjects clearly set out the important concepts, knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn. In a few subjects, the curriculum is not coherently set out. Sometimes small steps in learning are missed because of this. This affects some pupils' ability to write fluently.

Staff expertise has recently improved. However, some staff do not possess sufficient knowledge to teach all subjects effectively. In addition, some staff do not use the school's recently introduced checks on pupils' learning as effectively as they should. This means that pupils develop gaps in their knowledge that are not swiftly identified and addressed.

Reading is a priority. Staff have the knowledge they need to teach phonics effectively. Phonics is taught every day. Some pupils need additional support to catch up with their peers in phonics. These pupils benefit from extra support to achieve this. Pupils read books that are matched to their phonic knowledge. They are encouraged to read regularly and most do. Most pupils learn to read with accuracy and fluency by the end of Year 2.

The early years environment is calm and welcoming. Children are well cared for. Staff have identified that children typically need more support with physical development when they join the school. Staff ensure that there are opportunities for children to practise their gross and fine motor skills. For example, children in Reception practised writing a short sentence about Shrove Tuesday. In Nursery, children used rolling pins and shape cutters to create pancakes out of dough with increasing confidence. They develop their concentration skills well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and appropriate support is put into place. Staff are trained well to support pupils with SEND, and these pupils are supported effectively. External agencies are involved as needed and advice is followed.

Attendance rates are slowly improving. Staff make regular checks on pupils' attendance. They support families to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. However, there remain too many pupils who are regularly absent. These pupils miss out on important learning, which leads to gaps in their knowledge.

Most pupils understand fundamental British values. They know that it is right to respect different opinions and beliefs. There are a range of leadership roles for pupils to take on to make a positive difference to the school community. These include being a sustainability ambassador or member of the junior leadership team. Sustainability ambassadors attend the trust's pupil parliament meetings to learn about sustainability.

Governors and trustees were slow to act when standards started to decline. They now have clear oversight of the school's work. There is more rigour in these checks now. Governors and trustees know that standards need to improve and are ambitious for all pupils. They hold leaders to account. Staff report that their well-being is very well supported. Over the past few years, due to staffing changes, staff's workload increased. The trust has put extra staff into the school. Staff workload is now managed effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not coherently set out. This does not enable pupils to build secure knowledge and skills in the subjects over time. The school should review and embed the curriculum for a few subjects to ensure that the sequence of learning has the expected impact.
- The school has not ensured that all staff have the required subject knowledge to teach all subjects effectively. This means that some subjects are not taught as well as they should be. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise to teach the whole curriculum effectively.
- The school has not ensured that recently introduced checks on pupils' learning are used effectively. As a result, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge that are not swiftly identified and addressed. The school should ensure that staff accurately assess pupils' learning in all subjects to identify and address gaps in their knowledge.
- Too many pupils are absent from school. As a result, they miss important learning. The school should do everything possible to increase attendance rates so that pupils achieve their full potential.

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 May 2019.

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	142078
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10344055
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Johnny Anderson
CEO of the trust	Lisa Sarikaya
Principal	Carly Wright
Website	www.ksmacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a before-school club.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school is part of St Bart's Multi-Academy trust.
- This is a Church of England school. It is part of the Church of England Diocese of Lichfield.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in October 2024. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight years of this date.

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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, vice principals and other leaders. The inspector held a meeting with members of the trust board and representatives of the local governing committee. The inspector met with the CEO and other leaders from the trust. The inspector met with representatives of the Diocese of Lichfield. Meetings were held with curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to many pupils during the inspection.
- 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.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. The inspector spoke to parents. The inspector also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Emma Titchener, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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