

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Junior Academy

Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norwich, Norfolk NR15 2UY

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Laura Richardson. The school is part of the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's 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), Sam Nixon, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by Fred Corbett.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this school. Pupils engage with positivity in lessons because they are interesting and enjoyable. Teachers explain things well, and if pupils are stuck, they help them to work things out. The school is a calm, quiet environment where pupils are happy and exceptionally well cared for.

Pupils take pride in their work and concentrate well in lessons. The school has raised its expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Pupils' achievement across the curriculum is improving and is evident through the work they produce. Staff are well trained to teach the curriculum. There is highly effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school helps pupils with SEND to recognise and understand their emotions. Pupils are supported to use a range of strategies to help them to regulate their behaviour. They can focus on their learning uninterrupted.

Staff develop pupils to be responsible citizens. Pupils demonstrate this in their local community. For example, Year 5 pupils recently organised a successful community celebration for Victory in Europe Day. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. A vast range of enrichment activities help pupils to live out the school's values such as resilience and teamwork.

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

Leaders have turned this school around since the last inspection. They have provided tailored training and coaching so that all staff effectively teach the curriculum. In most subjects, assessment is used well. The forensic approach to analysing what pupils have learned is instrumental in identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school successfully uses this information to fill these gaps, so all pupils achieve well. Pupils' work is generally of a high quality across the curriculum. These improvements and the impact of the curriculum are not yet fully evident in the school's most recent published outcomes.

The school has implemented the ambitious curriculum well in most subjects. However, in a few subjects, teachers move too quickly through subject content. Although pupils remember the facts about topics, they do not always secure a depth of understanding or develop skills proficiency.

Teachers deliver the reading curriculum effectively. Staff support pupils to become independent and fluent readers. Pupils enjoy going to the library to select and read from a wide range of interesting books. Most pupils become avid readers by the end of Year 6. They talk about their favourite authors and explain why they like them. Lessons are carefully structured, so pupils gain confidence in understanding what they read and in developing their writing skills.

The school has strong systems in place to rapidly identify the needs of pupils with SEND. The school has set up an effective and inclusive provision for pupils with SEND that need

more support. Pupils in the provision get the help they need to be ready to access the ambitious curriculum. The school is tenacious in securing the best support from external experts.

The school has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour approach consistently well. Pupils find that 'reflections' help them to contemplate on their choices and make better decisions next time. Consequently, suspensions have significantly reduced. Pupils are exceptionally accepting and considerate of one another. Attendance continues to improve due to the intelligent and rapid action the school takes when pupils face barriers to attending regularly.

All pupils enjoy an abundant array of exciting enrichment opportunities inspired by the school's values. Every term, enrichment activities are built into the school's timetable. For example, pupils regularly visit the elderly and share craft activities. Pupils have created a quiet space for prayer and a book of prayers to help them reflect on the needs of the community and the wider world. There are numerous after-school sports clubs. Pupils value their special responsibilities, for example ethos and curriculum ambassadors. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

The school has addressed all the issues from the last inspection. Staff are proud to work at the school. They know that leaders consider their workload when they implement changes to improve the school further. Those responsible for governance understand their statutory responsibilities and carry them out diligently.

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, teachers move too quickly through the curriculum. As a result, some pupils do not get the depth of understanding or develop the skills proficiency that is set out in the ambitious curriculum. The school should ensure that teaching allows all pupils to gain a depth of understanding and skills proficiency across 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	137311
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10378508
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Fred Corbett
CEO of the trust	Sam Nixon
Headteacher	Laura Richardson
Website	www.stmaryscoejunior.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant staff changes. A new headteacher started at the school in January 2024. Five further teachers have also been appointed.
- The school will receive their next Section 48 inspection in 2026.

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with senior leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and representatives from the local governing body and the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's multi-academy trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, history, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to some parents before school. The inspectors considered responses to the online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Davies

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