



Jersey Schools Review Framework – Independent Report of

St Mary's Primary School

La Rue Verte, St Mary, Jersey JE3 3DA

Headteacher: Maria Stegenwalner

Review date: 13-15 June 2023

Summary

Pupils are proud to be at St Mary's Primary School and respond well to the teaching they receive. They are considerate to each other, work well together, and show understanding of the cultures, backgrounds and differing needs of others. Pupils say there is very little unkind behaviour here, and they are confident they will be helped if they report any concerns. This is a calm, happy school, where pupils are well cared for and safe.

Pupils' achievement is usually close to Jersey averages in annual assessments. Solid progress is made in reading, writing and mathematics. Early reading is promoted well through the effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to younger pupils.

There is a determination from leaders that all pupils should do well. Well-targeted support ensures that multi-lingual learners (MLL) and pupils entitled to Jersey Premium generally make similar progress to their peers. Staff cater well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Successful planning and good support usually ensure they make strong progress. In some cases, more detailed planning identifying small steps of progress would benefit the pupils with the greatest level of need. The school offers helpful support from its own resources for pupils with emotional or mental health needs.

In Nursery and Reception classes staff ensure that the children make a good start. They learn well from varied and stimulating activities and the systematic development of their basic skills. Children work and play together happily. Teaching successfully lays good foundations for future learning and success.

Overall, the school's teaching is effective with pupils at the top of the school doing particularly well. The teaching techniques used by staff typically lead to purposeful learning. However, occasionally the quality of adults' questioning of pupils could be more effective. Learning in some subjects is limited because detailed plans of work to be covered in each year group are not yet complete.

Leadership of many aspects of the school's work is strong and knowledgeable. Senior leaders know the school's current strengths and weaknesses well and have good plans for improvement. They have maintained an optimistic vision for school and staff development, despite some recent challenging times. An ethos of effective care and support for pupils has been created. Leaders are working towards improving some aspects of monitoring provision, and the completion of curriculum planning.

Full report

Achievement

- In tests and teacher assessments in Years 6 and 2, pupils often achieve similarly to pupils across Jersey. All groups of learners tend to do well.
- Current pupils make progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards are high. Often, work across the curriculum is rich, deep and well-planned, and enhanced by visits and visitors. Here, pupils recall their previous learning very well, using subject vocabulary effectively. Much work is well set out and neatly presented.
- Pupils in Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 2, learn phonics effectively. Over time they learn to read confidently and fluently. Reading books are generally well matched to pupils' current learning. Pupils mainly enjoy reading and often do so regularly. The school rightly uses early reading books based on the letter sounds being learnt at the time. However, a small minority of pupils are less motivated by these and would benefit from more varied books. Older pupils continue to read well, expressively and with understanding.
- Progress in writing is mainly secure. Using quality literature to inspire pupils' work is making a positive impact. By Year 6, pupils tackle demanding work with enthusiasm and confidence. For some younger pupils, the fundamentals of writing are not well enough established because too great a variety of styles are tackled too quickly.
- Pupils cover appropriate mathematics for their ages and most explain their understanding and methods well. Work is usually set out accurately and calculations are efficient. Mental arithmetic is mainly sound although a small proportion struggle to recall number facts. In science, pupils remember and understand age-appropriate work. They observe, predict, measure and record their findings well using charts and tables. They have too little chance to devise their own investigations.
- Learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a strength, particularly in relation to mental health, diversity and the acceptance of difference. In religious education a wide range of work is covered, and pupils show respect for the subject. However, the quality of written work and the thought behind it are not consistent enough.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about their work in art and design. They enjoy learning techniques and exploring their own ideas freely. Finished work is often of high quality. More emphasis needs to be given to developing knowledge about different art materials and about architecture. Achievement in design & technology is limited because pupils learn too little about the way things work. Some age-groups do very well but most have too little opportunity to make their own designs and to evaluate and improve them.
- In some parts of the school pupils make good progress in history and geography. Where work involves practical activities and visits, pupils remember and understand a lot. However, for some age groups, learning in both subjects is superficial and not well-enough planned.
- In Nursery and Reception, the very large majority of children make expected progress from their starting points and are on course to achieve the expected standard by age five. Most make a good start with communication and language, personal social and emotional development, and with physical development (including strength, balance and a sense of space.) A large majority develop a solid knowledge of letter sounds; this supports early reading well. Mathematical development is effective and good progress is made in a range of creative activities. A small minority of pupils, mainly boys, currently struggle with aspects of listening, writing and maintaining concentration.

Behaviour, personal development and welfare

- Pupils respond well and quickly to instructions in class, so lesson time is well used. Movement round the school is quiet, calm and controlled. Behaviour during breaks is also positive, with very little evidence of any disagreements or unkindness. Supervision levels are good.
- Occasionally class teaching moves on too quickly before some pupils have grasped an idea or finished an activity. Here, small minorities of pupils lose concentration and focus.
- A small number of pupils have complex needs and sometimes become anxious or distracted. They are supported well to spot their own difficulties emerging and work with staff to overcome them. This helps them focus so that learning can continue without disruption.
- School attendance is lower than before the disruption of COVID-19 but is broadly in line with the current Jersey average.
- Pupils' relationships with staff are strong, confident and trusting. Older pupils are clearly proud of their school and very loyal. They praise the support given by staff and appreciate the way they are being equipped for their move to secondary education.
- Pupils generally learn to collaborate well with each other, for instance in preparing presentations or discussing ideas and problems. They take turns well and are often quite articulate when making a point in a group or to the class.
- The curriculum and ethos of the school help pupils to recognise and value cultures and traditions other than their own. Pupils learn about the behaviour and responses of those with particular needs. As a result, they show strong respect for each other and for difference. This is a respectful and supportive school, which makes effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. St Mary's gained its Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award during this academic year.
- A rich programme of activities, visits and visitors helps broaden pupils' horizons. For instance, visitors contribute widely to their understanding of safety and safeguarding.
- Clubs and in-class responsibilities encourage pupils to contribute to school life, for instance by acting as digital leaders, or belonging to the School Council or the eco club. The school is well-maintained, and pupils play a part in this. They show pride in, and strong allegiance to their school.
- Pupils say there is very little bullying. They are confident that they can report any concerns and that they will be listened to. They understand the potential dangers associated with online communication and know that their internet use is monitored carefully.
- A member of staff supports pupils with identified social, emotional or mental health needs. This very helpful provision could be further strengthened by ensuring it meshes together with planned PSHE lessons.
- In the early years, children are confident and comfortable with those who teach and care for them. Their welfare is a clear priority. Children's ideas and contributions to discussions are listened to carefully and are valued. Class routines are well understood and provide security. Resources are well looked after. Children often choose their own equipment and are confident to follow their own ideas and interests. Inevitably, there is occasional minor conflict between children, but issues are resolved through quiet staff intervention or by the children themselves. Friendships develop well and, as they get older, children learn to play and work together happily.

Effectiveness of teaching

- There is a range of effective teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, leading to much strong learning over time. Assessment is often helpful. In the best examples teachers are alert to misconceptions and deal with them quickly, according to the pupils' needs.
- Across the school teachers and teaching assistants are usually very skilful in supporting MLL pupils and those with SEND. In general, effective help is provided, quietly and efficiently aiding pupils to engage in classroom work without pressure or conflict.
- New learning for the class is often well explained, and helpful examples are given. As a result, pupils know what to do and are confident to start on individual activities. New vocabulary is introduced clearly, so pupils learn and use it well.
- There is a well-established and effective approach to teaching phonics, early reading and spelling. Staff are well trained and adapt their approaches well to meet individual needs, while ensuring they follow the scheme approaches accurately.
- In the best mathematics teaching, work is introduced step by step and learning is built up through discussion, working through examples together and offering sufficient practice to develop pupils' independence. Pupils often carry out calculations and solve problems well, drawing on mental arithmetic skills. Working-out is generally neat and accurate, but this is not always so, which leads to imprecision and makes it difficult for staff to spot the source of errors and confusion.
- In a range of other subjects, work is well paced, so pupils learn thoroughly and make steady, secure progress. Occasionally, teaching pushes on too fast and so learning becomes insecure or superficial. Here small numbers of pupils feel discouraged and show quiet off-task behaviour. Some teaching includes activities which are over-complicated, or superfluous. This limits opportunities for practice of more important work.
- For some pupils, visual resources, including projected images, are hard or impossible to see. This arises because of pupils' seating positions and the shape of some classrooms. Teachers should be more alert to this issue, which affects the learning of some.
- Much teaching involves asking questions. In the most effective cases, children are expected to think before responding and to answer as much to the class as the teacher. As a result, pupils consider their answers, speak clearly and explain well. This supports the learning of the class. Occasionally teacher's expectations are lower and so questioning is less effective. Here, inaudible answers dominate and the teacher relays or rephrases what has been said.
- Parents receive regular and helpful outlines of the work about to be covered in class each term. The school also sends termly reports on pupils' progress and attainment. These exceed Jersey's requirements. Reports do not currently offer information on pupils who regularly tackle work demanding greater depth of understanding. This would be a useful addition to reports.
- In the early years class activities focus on pupils' needs and interests and are stimulating and engaging. Pictures and simplified language are used well to give instructions and develop understanding where extra support is needed. Teaching helps children master the basics of letter sounds for simple reading and writing. Staff make accurate assessments of children's achievement, but do not involve parents in the process as they should. The curriculum would be improved with firmer long-term planning to guarantee balance between the different areas of learning throughout the year.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- Leaders take school improvement seriously and they know St Mary's main strengths and weaknesses well. Senior leadership has worked hard, in the face of some significant challenges including unavoidable staff absence, recruitment difficulties and an extended programme of building works. Over time, clear improvements have been made, with a result that the school is a happy and supportive place, often with high expectations of its pupils. A new system of performance review and appraisal is playing an effective part in helping staff to do well.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable and effective. A number of detailed and well-thought-out curriculum plans have been produced. When well used, these are improving pupils' achievement, but more work will be needed to achieve consistently high standards across all subjects. Currently some subjects are tackled through integrated topics. In some areas this has led to shallow or limited coverage of some of the necessary content.
- Senior leaders are rightly seeking to broaden the experience of staff by inviting some to play a greater part in curriculum development. This promises to speed up the current programme of improvements.
- Leaders have established the right culture where inclusion is prioritised, responsibility for SEND is shared by all, and parents are involved. Leadership shows knowledge, experience and a zeal for pupils with SEND to do well. The school is proactive in meeting a range of needs and there is a general understanding of the most helpful and supportive strategies to use, including working in close partnership with other professionals and agencies. Pupils with a Record of Need (RoN) receive provision closely matched to their requirements. However, some would benefit further from more detailed plans, spelling out the small steps of intended progress, and how each step is to be achieved.
- There are good arrangements for the supervision, monitoring and support of vulnerable pupils. Parents/Carers and pupils are involved well in making decisions about personal targets.
- Provision for safeguarding is effective, being led by well-trained and knowledgeable senior members of staff. The current policy meets requirements. It has recently been circulated to parents. Vulnerable pupils are monitored regularly, and well-regarded commercial software is used for record-keeping. Pupils receive suitable teaching about potential dangers and how to keep themselves safe online. Internet use is monitored and (infrequent) incidents of inappropriate use are tackled.
- The school site is secure, tidy and well-maintained. The review identified no immediate concerns about health and safety. However, there have been some lapses in completing visual inspections, including electrical safety, and audits when due, and in ensuring that training is up to date. Greater leadership oversight is needed to ensure a rolling programme of checks is implemented.
- Leadership of the early years provision is carried out with passion. Relationships between EYFS staff and children are good and the children achieve well. The day-to-day curriculum is broad and well thought-out. Better monitoring is needed to improve self-evaluation and inform a curriculum plan that ensures an ongoing balance between all of the areas of learning.
- A new school website is under construction. The current site does not contain sufficient information on school policies, or the range of up-to-date and useful information often found for Jersey schools.
- A parental survey was conducted for this review. A large majority of the 42 responses evaluated the school positively. A significant number of individual remarks and suggestions were made. These included: parents' difficulties with staggered start- and

end-times for school; requests for hot school lunches; a desire for more out of school activities, including sport; and a claimed over-emphasis on Christianity in religious education. Review evidence indicates that staggered school times may indeed be difficult for some parents to manage; the school does not currently have facilities to offer hot lunches; for its size, the school offers a wide variety of clubs, the number of which compares favourably with similar schools; and the school makes appropriate statutory provision for religious education, although the specific sessions sometimes mentioned in the survey were not seen. The school has seen an analysis of the survey results.

Recommendations

The school should take the following actions.

1. Continue to improve the curriculum so teachers know what must be taught in each subject in each year group by:
 - creating or adopting new plans which provide sufficient guidance for teachers and ensure full coverage of the Jersey Curriculum and its aims
 - supporting staff with training and then monitoring their implementation of these plans
 - checking pupils' developing knowledge, understanding and skills regularly
 - monitoring the use of time, to ensure each subject receives the time already allocated to it
 - ensuring the early years curriculum offers a balance between the different areas of learning across each school year.
2. Grow and develop wider leadership experience amongst the staff by:
 - identifying areas of curriculum expertise in staff and supporting them to take responsibility for subjects
 - ensuring guidance, supervision, and time are available for the responsibilities taken.
3. Ensure all health and safety checks are made, and required training is undertaken on time by:
 - scheduling dates by which all required checks and training should be completed
 - providing guidance and oversight regularly and implementing more systematic methods of monitoring.

Information about the school

Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll:	170
Headteacher:	Maria Stegenwalner
School telephone number:	01534 481690
School website:	www.stmary.sch.je

Contextual information

- 18% of pupils are eligible for Jersey Premium funding.
- 16% of pupils are assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school offers nursery provision.

Information about the review

- Reviewers visited lessons across all year groups.
- Discussions were held with staff who have leadership responsibilities at various levels.
- A large number of documents were reviewed including; those relating to safeguarding and welfare, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, some plans for the curriculum and several policies.
- Discussions were held with pupils about their experiences in the school and about their recent learning.
- Samples of pupils' work across most subjects were considered.
- A number of pupils read to reviewers and discussed their reading and preferences.
- Brief observations were carried out before school, at breaktimes and lunchtimes and a visit was made to the school's breakfast club.
- The results of surveys of parents and school staff were analysed.

The review team

An experienced off-Island reviewer led the team of four reviewers.

Enquiries about this report should be addressed to Head School Improvement & Advisory Service, Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Highlands Campus, PO Box 142, St Saviour, Jersey JE4 8QJ.