

Inspection of The Cathedral School of St Mary

Cecil Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth, Devon PL1 5HW

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Roisin Wright. This school is part of the Plymouth CAST 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, Zoe Batten, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Elizabeth Ruth O'Donovan.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Cathedral School of St Mary provides a warm welcome to pupils with diverse backgrounds. There are many different nationalities represented in the school. Each of these is celebrated. Pupils say this is one of the best things about the school. The mutual respect they have for one another is clear.

The school nurtures positive, trusting relationships. At break and lunchtime, pupils' learning continues through well-designed play. Lessons proceed without disruption. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour are supported well. The school has high expectations of what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will achieve.

Starting in the early years, pupils develop resilience by working through any difficulties. School trips and community projects challenge and inspire pupils. For example, pupils

undertake a residential visit to a farm, where they learn not to give up and deepen their connections to nature and each other.

The school raises pupils' aspirations. Many attend the school's careers club and benefit from opportunities to engage with local employers. Pupils attend talks from people who have overcome challenges in their lives to be successful. These make a big impression. As a result of the school's work, pupils develop self-belief and an ambitious outlook.

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

Reading is central to the life of the school. Children in the early years begin learning phonics immediately. Many make quick progress. Staff take every opportunity to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge of sounds. Pupils practise their reading regularly. They enjoy this and take confidence from their growing fluency and understanding.

Every year, there are pupils who join the school having missed the start of the school's early reading programme. There are effective arrangements to help these pupils to catch up. It is not uncommon for pupils to join the school in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in these circumstances may speak English as an additional language and struggle to be ready for national examinations at the end of key stage 2. The school provides valuable support to these pupils. They make rapid gains in their language learning, which helps them to be ready for secondary school.

The school has strengthened its approach to identifying and supporting pupils with SEND. Staff are well equipped to support pupils with social and emotional needs. Leaders have established an inclusive culture in which pupils' needs are met effectively in the classroom, most of the time. In the early years, there is a sharp focus on children's communication needs. The curriculum and the environment support the development of speech and language well.

Since the previous inspection, the school has brought increased rigour to the teaching of reading and mathematics. The school makes regular checks on pupils' learning. The curriculum is often adapted in response, so that pupils steadily build on what they know. Nonetheless, there remains work to do to develop these approaches in some of the subjects of the wider curriculum. Occasionally, the work given to pupils is not well matched to their different starting points because these have not been identified clearly. This limits pupils' opportunities to show what they know and can do independently.

Carefully designed routines help to keep pupils on task and productive. Pupils know and follow the school's rules well. They understand the purpose of these and confidently explain how these promote important values, such as compassion and respect. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 play a key role in this. They recognise individuals who reflect the school's values in their work or their interactions with others.

The culture of the school supports the development of positive, lasting relationships between staff, pupils and parents. The quality of pastoral support is exceptional. Pupils

attend well because they feel happy and safe, and they know there is much they will miss out on if they are absent. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving rapidly.

Pupils have confident knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and in the local community, for example on the roads. The school provides a programme of learning about personal and social issues, including relationships and health. This is informed by local and national developments so that pupils have the most up-to-date guidance. Alongside this, pupils access a wealth of opportunities in sports and in the arts.

The arrangements for governance have served the school well. A skilled group of local governors supports the school's ethos. Trust leaders provide valuable guidance, for example, on the design of the curriculum. The trust has ensured that there are effective leadership arrangements in place to support ongoing school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has developed assessment practices which are not yet implemented consistently. As a result, adaptations to the curriculum are sometimes not well matched to pupils' different starting points. The school should use assessment to refine curriculum adaptations, so that these more precisely help pupils to build on what they already know and can do.

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	140785
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10378946
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Ruth O'Donovan
CEO of the trust	Zoe Batten
Headteacher	Roisin Wright
Website	www.cathedral-school.eschools.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school is part of the Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust. It includes a trust-run breakfast and after-school club.
- This school is a Roman Catholic academy in the Diocese of Plymouth. The school's last canonical inspection (section 48) was in November 2021.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the director of education and the school improvement officer from the multi-academy trust, the chair (who also represents the diocese) and vice chair of the local governing body, and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tom Page

Ofsted Inspector

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