

Inspection of St Mary Magdalene Academy

Liverpool Road, Islington, London N7 8PG

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud of their school. They describe it as a kind and welcoming place that promotes a keen sense of family, community and inclusion. Pupils and adults share a mutual respect. Pupils report that there is always an adult on hand to help. They say prejudice of any kind is not tolerated. They feel and are kept safe.

Staff have consistently high standards for pupils' learning and conduct. Pupils rise to these expectations. Around the school pupils behave respectfully to one another, adults and visitors. Lessons are industrious and purposeful. This is because learning proceeds without disruption. The curriculum is ambitious. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, work hard and produce work of high quality.

Pupils are encouraged to follow their talents and interests as well as achieve highly academically. Pupils enjoy representing their house when participating in whole-school events, such as sports day, basketball competitions and the spelling bee. They value the visitors who come to talk to them about their careers in different industries including television and theatre. As a result, pupils and students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

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

From the primary phase all the way through to the sixth form, there is a broad and interesting curriculum. It meets and often exceeds what is expected nationally. In each subject, leaders have thought carefully about what should be learned and when. This helps pupils to secure a depth of knowledge in different subjects and ensures they are well prepared for the more complex ideas they learn next. For example, when learning Mandarin, children in Reception are introduced to vocabulary through listening to and singing songs. Pupils go on to embed their understanding of grammatical structures so that by Year 6, pupils are well placed to write accurately in Mandarin. Similarly, in English, pupils practise reading and analysing contemporary poetry from different cultures, traditions and continents. Older pupils are consequently well placed to tackle poetry written before 1900 when they are in key stages 4 and 5.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified. Teachers are trained to understand their needs and make appropriate adaptations to tasks and activities. As a result, pupils are well supported to access the same curriculum as their peers, where possible, and be successful.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and expertise. They readily share a passion for their subjects with pupils and students. This is something that inspires pupils to develop and engage their own passions for study. Teachers implement the curriculum with precision. They set activities that are ambitious and help pupils to understand, practise and apply new knowledge. Teachers readily check if pupils have understood what is being taught and address misconceptions quickly.

Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. This starts in Reception when children learn to concentrate, reflect on and improve their work. In the sixth form, students are supported to develop independent approaches to learning. For example, students facilitate peer learning groups that research key topics before presenting their ideas to others. All pupils and students are expected to produce work of high quality. Pupils meet this expectation and are rightly proud of their achievements.

Reading has been prioritised by leaders. This starts in Reception where teachers are well trained to deliver the agreed phonics programme with precision. Pupils' progress in reading is carefully checked. Any who fall behind are supported to catch up quickly. This ensures that pupils develop into accurate, fluent and confident readers who can access the ambitious curriculum. Leaders have worked closely with the local library service to ensure pupils develop a love for reading. For younger pupils, story times are fun and engaging and introduce pupils to a wide range of authors. Older pupils and students read widely to enhance their learning in different subjects.

Pupils are calm, happy and motivated to learn. This is because there are strong, trusting relationships between pupils and adults built on care and respect. For example, staff sit and eat their lunch with pupils. This helps build the sense of family that pupils describe.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils access a wide range of visits and cultural experiences, including trips to the zoo, theatre, museums and galleries. They learn about different faiths and cultures. There are numerous activities pupils can attend from computing, chess and choir to a range of sports and study clubs. The careers curriculum supports pupils to consider their next steps. Sixth-form students feel very well supported to pursue their career aspirations and understand what qualifications they need.

Staff enjoy the family atmosphere created by leaders. They appreciate the opportunities they have to develop professionally and recognise that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are well trained and experienced in managing safeguarding concerns. They ensure staff know how to identify and report any concerns that may arise. Leaders work well with local safeguarding partners to ensure pupils and families receive the right help.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about appropriate and respectful relationships, online safety and the importance of maintaining good physical and

mental health. A range of effective systems are in place that actively support the emotional health of all those at the school.

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](#)' 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	134314
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10268030
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,459
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	311
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rhian Roberts
Headteacher	Victoria Linsley
Website	www.smmacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school, sponsored by the London Diocesan Board of Schools. The last section 48 inspection of the school was in March 2016.
- The school operates on two sites. The main site caters for all year groups from Reception to Year 13. The second site, for some sixth-form students, is at Clerkenwell Parochial Campus, Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UN.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The academy currently uses four registered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English (including early reading), mathematics, geography, languages and music. To do this, they met with subject leaders, visited lessons, had discussions with staff and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and their priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers, and the safeguarding and attendance officers.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by reviewing records and through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Una Buckley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Lack	Ofsted Inspector
Katerina Christodoulou	Ofsted Inspector
Karim Ismail	His Majesty's Inspector
Gareth Cross	Ofsted Inspector

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