

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126015
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	364000
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Arnold
Headteacher	Penny Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited nine lessons and observed four teachers. Inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff with key responsibilities and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and evaluated documentation such as policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work and records of their learning and progress, and the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors analysed 67 completed questionnaires from parents and carers, 15 from members of staff and 55 completed by pupils in Key Stage 2.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage progress and the evenness of their attainment at the end of Reception.
- How consistently well pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, including that of the current Year 6 and the impact of teaching and learning on raising attainment.
- Whether teaching and the curriculum consistently meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils in mixed-age classes.
- How effectively leaders at all levels evaluate the quality of the school's work and use this information to raise achievement.

Information about the school

This primary school is below average in size and draws its pupils both from the local village and further afield. Most children are White British, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. Few of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average as is the proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities. The majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have speech, literacy and numeracy and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A higher than average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils joining the school other than at the usual time is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. All other classes include pupils of two age ranges. The headteacher has led the school since September 2010.

The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark and an Eco-School award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Mark's provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. Achievement is satisfactory and there are strengths in pupils' personal development. The happy family atmosphere and the school's Christian ethos help to create a caring community and result in pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils behave well because they are well cared for, are kept and feel very safe and enjoy school. Pupils contribute well to the community in which the school plays an important part and have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. In a short space of time, the headteacher has effectively identified the school's strengths and where improvements are required. She has already provided a clear direction and strong management, and staff and governors are united in their resolve to move the school forward.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. When children enter school, their knowledge and skills are similar to those found in most schools. They make a satisfactory start in Reception although fewer reach higher levels in reading and writing than in aspects of early mathematics by the time they enter Year 1. Satisfactory progress continues in the rest of the school and pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. However, slightly fewer pupils than average reach the higher levels in both English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as pupils from different minority ethnic groups make progress in line with that of their peers.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well. However, teachers do not always make sufficient use of assessment information in their planning and as a result there is not the necessary challenge for more-able pupils or work is too hard for lower ability pupils. In Reception and Key Stage 1, there is not always enough direct teaching of reading and, in a few writing lessons, opportunities are missed to teach and consolidate reading skills. This limits the consistency of pupils' progress.

Pupils' enjoyment in school is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport. Recent improvements to the curriculum are beginning to help teachers to provide more stimulating opportunities for learning. Outdoor activities in Reception have begun to improve but they are not always stimulating and there are too few opportunities for children to make choices and learn independently.

Leaders are driving the improvement in teaching and learning satisfactorily. The headteacher has tackled some of the outstanding issues with urgency and vigour. For example, systems for checking teaching, pupils' progress and setting targets have been strengthened and staff are more accountable for pupils' progress. Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and leadership has started to be shared but middle leaders are still developing their ability to lead their subjects. Senior leaders' accurate evaluation means the school has appropriate priorities for moving forward. The governing

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body is dedicated and provides a great deal of support and, under the well-informed leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, governors are strengthening their role in challenging the school in matters of attainment and progress. All this, along with increased opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in their children's learning, indicates the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage improve more-able children's attainment in reading and writing and provide all children with more opportunities to make choices and to learn independently, including through enriched outdoor play.
- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their progress by July 2012 by:
 - developing teachers' skills in using assessment so that work is better matched to pupils' learning, including for higher and lower ability pupils
 - strengthening the direct teaching of reading and consolidation of reading skills during writing lessons in Reception and Key Stage 1
 - ensuring teachers' expectations are always high enough to raise pupils' achievement.
- Develop stronger systems for shared leadership and management by developing the roles of middle managers so they play a full part in raising pupils' achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Lesson observations and the evaluation of pupils' tracking data and their work showed pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastic learners who are keen to take some responsibility for their own learning. Practical activities are often used to bring relevance to academic learning. However, in the mixed-age classes, pupils are not consistently challenged. This was seen in a mixed Year 5/6 mathematics lesson where pupils collected data to find out 'whether taller pupils have larger feet'. Although most pupils learned satisfactorily, the inconsistent opportunities for the Year 6 pupils to learn at higher levels resulted in some underachievement for more-able pupils. Expectations for the lower ability Year 2 pupils are not always high enough in mathematics when they learn alongside younger Key Stage 1 pupils.

Observations during the inspection show the benefits of extra help for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to develop their speech and adjust to school. For example, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped well and incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. However, as the level of the work is not consistently matched to their needs in lessons in literacy and numeracy, progress sometimes slows. Later entrants are helped to quickly adjust to the school and their progress and learning are similar to their peers. The school's good care, support and guidance are shown in many aspects of pupils' personal development, including in the way pupils have a very good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils reported no bullying and trust adults to deal with any that might occur.

Pupils' strong sense of responsibility and maturity underpins their good behaviour and is evident in how well they cooperate and share ideas in lessons. By Year 6, they are keen ambassadors for the school. Throughout the school, they make a good contribution to its

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work and to their community, for example, through worship, eco councils, fundraising and doing charity work. Energy conservation and recycling activities along with extra-curricular activities, such as the gardening club, help pupils to care for their planet and are recognised in their Eco-award. The strong community ethos enables pupils of all backgrounds to get on well together. Along with demonstrating their responsibility within school, of special note is pupils' respect for each other's backgrounds and each other's religions. Their understanding of the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily is reflected in their enthusiasm for sport and in the school's national awards. Pupils' attendance is average and showing signs of improving. The extent to which they apply their basic skills and regularly attend school prepares them soundly for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils experience an appropriate mix of listening to the teacher, responding to questions, sharing ideas and working independently. Lesson introductions are enlivened through the use of interactive whiteboards. This, along with teachers' effective strategies for managing pupils' behaviour, means that pupils are attentive and interested. However, opportunities for well-focused learning are sometimes missed because learning tasks are not fully adjusted to meet pupils' needs. The school has started to improve systems for teaching phonics but there is insufficient consolidation and teaching of key reading skills to Reception and Key Stage 1.

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The curriculum satisfactorily develops pupils' basic skills and provides many opportunities to strengthen their personal and social development. Cross-curricular links are developing and a worthwhile array of visits and visitors enlivens the curriculum. Links with other schools enable pupils to interact and learn with more pupils of a similar age than would otherwise be possible although the impact of partnerships on pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils work and play in a very safe, secure and welcoming environment where they know that they are valued as individuals and their views count. Good pastoral care ensures pupils' good personal development and well-being and contributes to their satisfactory progress. Good induction arrangements when pupils join help them to settle quickly, including later entrants to the school. The school works effectively to support and include pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. It draws upon its good links with outside specialists to help these pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example those with emotional and behavioural and/or speech difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good leadership. She is ambitious for pupils and staff and this is driving improvement well. Staff share her vision and are clear about the actions needed to bring about improvement. She has begun to create effective systems for leaders to work together in developing and evaluating the work of the school. The headteacher rigorously checks the quality of teaching. Staff have welcomed this as well as the support they are being given for improving their teaching. The collection and evaluation of data has been strengthened and all staff are accountable for evaluating the impact of their provision on pupils' progress. Sound partnerships with parents and carers help to promote pupils' satisfactory learning in school. Parents and carers are very pleased with the way the headteacher is improving the school, including the development of closer links between home and school. This is expressed by one parent who wrote, 'I really appreciate the changes the headteacher has brought, such as making parents more welcome and beginning to improve Key Stage 1 teaching methods.'

Governors have high ambitions for the school and, under the good leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, have recently had training for monitoring pupils' academic performance so they are in a better position to hold the school to account. The governing body is developing its involvement in strategic planning for raising achievement. They have been very effective in improving accommodation, for example in the provision of a kitchen and hot lunches and for improving the outdoor learning area for Reception children. The governing body works closely with the school to promote safeguarding

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arrangements, which are good. Safeguarding is firmly established in policies, working practices, for example good quality risk assessments, and the ethos of the school. The school site is secure, all relevant training is up to date, and the vetting of adults working with pupils is recorded well.

There was no evidence of discrimination at the time of the inspection and the similar rates of progress of different groups of pupils as they move up through the school mean that equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Leaders are keen to lift these features to become good in the future and are well aware of the need to ensure that the most able pupils and those who find learning more difficult always have suitable work throughout all lessons. Work has begun on ensuring a better match of activities to pupils' needs but there remain inconsistencies in provision.

The school promotes cohesion in its own community well. It has evaluated that further work is needed to reach out further into the wider community and has clear plans in place for promoting and extending pupils' understanding from national and global perspectives.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Relationships are good and children settle quickly because they are happy and kept very safe. They make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Reception, their attainment is average overall although levels are higher for problem solving, reasoning and numeracy than in reading, sounds and letters and writing. During whole-class literacy sessions, there is not always enough direct teaching of reading or involvement of the children in reading words together, for example when reading a shared text about 'How seeds grow'. Topics such as 'St Mark's Garden Centre' interest the children and are used well to develop children's knowledge and understanding and interest in nature. Some play activities are purposeful, for example opportunities for role play in the 'garden centre cafe'. However,

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learning through play activities both inside and outdoors is not always stimulating so that children do not develop their skills to the highest level. The school is already working to ensure a better balance between adult-directed and child-selected activities to give children more opportunities to explore their environment and to learn independently.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Thorough assessment is made of children's skills on entry and their subsequent progress but assessment is not consistently used to plan activities that match children's learning needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

More than two thirds of all parents and carers returned questionnaires, which is an above average rate of response. A large majority are pleased with their children's experiences at the school. They feel this is a happy school that their children enjoy attending and where they are kept safe. They are very pleased with the way the headteacher is building on the school's strengths and making important changes, including strengthening communications systems. A very small minority are concerned that their children are not making enough progress and these were mainly parents and carers of children in Reception and Key Stage 1. Particular concerns were that some pupils were making inconsistent progress in Years 1 and 2, and the impact of teacher absence for particular year groups. Inspectors agree with parents' and carers' positive comments. They also find that pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, although inconsistent at times. The school is working hard to ensure that all children are given consistency in their teaching and learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's C of E Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 96 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	51	31	46	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	63	23	34	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	37	37	55	4	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	31	36	54	10	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	31	41	61	5	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	24	43	64	7	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	48	32	48	3	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	33	38	57	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	40	34	51	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	37	38	57	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	45	30	45	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	58	28	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	60	24	36	3	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's C of E Primary School, Staplefield, Haywards Heath

RH17 6EN

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspectors to your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education and here are some of the things your school does well.

- You help to make your school a special place because you are very helpful and get on very well with each other.
- Your spiritual, moral and social education is good and you behave well.
- You understand how important it is to keep fit and healthy and really enjoy sport.
- You have some good opportunities for clubs, including sport.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors think carefully about what is best for you and are working hard to make your school better.

This is what we are asking your school to do to improve.

- In Reception, make sure you do as well in reading and writing as you do in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and also give you better choices for learning through indoor and outdoor play.
- Make sure more of you reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6.
- Make sure that your work in all lessons is just at the right level and never too easy or too hard for you.
- Make sure all school leaders contribute equally to making the school better and check how well things are going.

Well done for doing so much for the community. Please keep this up! We hope you will continue to enjoy school and work hard in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector

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