

# Mark Church of England VC First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123811
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	359522
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Henderson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	143
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julie Biggadike
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anna Yates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	The Causeway, Mark Highbridge TA9 4QA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01278 641262
<b>Fax number</b>	01278 641681
<b>Email address</b>	office@mark.somerset.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They visited nine lessons or part lessons, observed five teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, its self-evaluation, tracking information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum documentation, minutes of the governing body meetings, staff and pupil questionnaires and 118 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The quality of teaching and the use of assessment and their impact on the learning and progress of pupils, particularly for boys and higher-achieving pupils.
- Whether the level of expectation and challenge in lessons is sufficient to enable all pupils to reach higher standards and make rapid progress.
- The effectiveness of leadership at all levels in meeting the needs of all pupils and demonstrating the capacity to sustain improvements.
- The impact of the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage on improving provision and ensuring consistently good outcomes for children.

## Information about the school

Mark Church of England First School is smaller than average. It has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in one Reception/Year 1 class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of those pupils have speech and language difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. A breakfast club, managed by the governing body, operates on the school site and was included as part of this inspection. A pre-school operates on the school site and is not managed by the governing body; it is subject to a separate inspection.

The previous headteacher left at the end of the summer term 2010. The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2010. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in September 2010. The school has recently received the Rights Respecting Schools award, Healthy Schools Plus and Active mark awards.

**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

Mark Church of England First School is a satisfactory school. The school is going through a period of significant change and many staff and governors have recently taken up new responsibilities. Nevertheless, the staff and governing body are dedicated to the strong Christian ethos of the school; morale is high and there is a clear vision and shared commitment to the school's improvement. Partnerships with parents are outstanding. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive, with many mentioning how happy their children are at school. As one parent commented, 'All the staff at Mark School are dedicated to helping my children learn and grow emotionally and academically.' Children enjoy school, feel safe and behave well. They know there is someone to turn to if they have a problem and older pupils provide good support to younger pupils around the school and during playtimes.

Children get off to a good start in Reception Year where they progress well in all areas of learning because teaching is good. Progress in Year 1 to Year 4 is satisfactory and attainment has been average over the last three years by the time pupils transfer to middle school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers; however, some have made good progress, particularly in overcoming barriers to learning, because of the level of care and support provided by all staff. The positive ethos that underpins the school's work is evident in pupils' good spiritual, moral and social development and this is reflected in their recent achievement of the Rights Respecting School award. The pupils' cultural understanding is less well developed.

The large majority of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good. All teachers manage pupils well and create a calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning. However, in some lessons, assessments are not used sufficiently well to challenge all groups of pupils, particularly high achievers. Furthermore, too little emphasis is placed on ensuring pupils are clear about how to improve their work, through feedback in marking or by using short-term targets consistently to show pupils when their target has been achieved.

The governing body and the acting headteacher have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The promotion within the school of the acting headteacher has provided continuity and stability during the current interim arrangements. The governing body carries out its statutory responsibilities, but strategic and development planning does not measure the success of planned improvements precisely and the monitoring does not always focus on the most important areas for improvement. Recent improvements in pupil tracking procedures provide teachers and leaders with a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving. Teachers are held accountable for the attainment and progress of pupils through regular pupil progress meetings with senior

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leaders. Those recent improvements and the leaders' realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development show it has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - using sharper and more measurable success criteria in development planning so that the impact of improvements can be evaluated
  - increasing the rigour with which leaders, managers and the governing body monitor the work of the school to identify more precisely where to encourage the school to improve.
- Make more effective use of the good assessment practice already established within the school by:
  - ensuring marking provides pupils consistently with information on how to improve their work
  - using pupils' targets consistently to accelerate progress and provide detailed steps for improvement.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Children start in Reception Year with skills levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Attainment by the end of Year 4 is not higher than average because the good progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not matched by the progress in Years 1 to 4. Since 2008, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been declining. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is wider than that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This was particularly the case in 2010, where, by the end of Year 2, the attainment of boys was well below that of the girls. The school has worked hard to address the issue and inspection evidence confirmed that, although the achievement of boys remains below that of girls, current school data show the gap is narrowing. As a result of meeting academic expectations for their age, pupils achieve a satisfactory preparation for their future lives.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and this is seen clearly in their enthusiasm to contribute to discussions and provide answers to questions in lessons. They listen respectfully to the ideas of their classmates. In one Year 4 Literacy lesson linked to the Hindu story of 'The blind men and the elephant', pupils were eager to provide examples of clues to make a riddle and identify an animal. Their thoughtful ideas were explained well and the teacher's good questioning enabled pupils to complete a riddle successfully in pairs and groups.

Pupils are happy to come to school, working and playing together harmoniously. That is reflected in their above-average rates of attendance. The pupils say they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy very much the daily 'Wake and Shake' sessions held in the playground at the start of the school day. Participation rates in additional sporting activities are high. The Healthy Schools Plus and Active Mark awards reflect the way the school encourages pupils successfully to live a

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healthy lifestyle. The pupils' contribution to the school community through selling healthy snacks at playtimes and as play leaders shows their willingness to take responsibility.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

Teaching is good, as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and planning of lessons that are enjoyable and interesting. There are good links between subjects and clear learning objectives are shared with pupils. In the vast majority of lessons seen, the work was matched well to the abilities of groups of pupils. However, assessment information is not always used sufficiently well to challenge all abilities within the class. Teachers mark work regularly, but the marking does not always tell pupils how to improve and, although pupils have targets in writing and mathematics, they are not used sufficiently well to accelerate progress. In good lessons, pupils are involved actively in learning. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, pupils were working together enthusiastically to explore the shadows created by objects as they shone a torchlight on them. They enjoyed the active nature of the lesson and were able to discover new and interesting facts about how light travels. Teaching assistants are deployed well in lessons to support learning, using effective questioning skills to engage pupils and support teaching.

The curriculum is of a good quality. It has a strong emphasis on the development of personal and basic skills, which are taught well. Effective cross-curricular links enliven learning, with a broad range of visits, visitors and focus weeks. The use of the outdoor

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learning environment is particularly strong and the school's outdoor classroom is used well to develop an understanding of how to deal with risk and enable pupils to use their initiative to solve problems.

Pastoral care is effective. The needs of pupils whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable have been identified and suitable provision is in place to enable them to make satisfactory progress. There are good systems for introducing pupils to the school and the pupils are supported well when transferring to middle school. The breakfast club provides a good standard of care and a welcoming start to the day for the pupils who attend, with access to a range of interesting activities.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development within the school. She has successfully motivated the staff team to seek further improvement. Systems and structures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are in place. A new system for tracking pupil progress and using assessment information to inform teachers better is at an early stage of development and the impact of this action is limited at present. The new senior leadership team is working together effectively to raise attainment and promote good pupil progress. The governing body is keen to provide a suitable balance of challenge and support, although this has yet to have a significant impact on raising pupil achievement. It is aware of the need to measure more precisely the progress the school is making towards achieving its plans and targets. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Staff are trained regularly to keep children safe and new staff are checked for their suitability. Some risk assessments, however, do not focus precisely on specific hazards. The school tackles discrimination firmly and its promotion of equal opportunity is satisfactory.

The school has good links within the local community and the church. There is strong collaboration with the local partnerships of schools and staff are active in leading innovations and developments. For example, one teacher leads other schools to develop 'Forest School' activities and has produced a set of very useful publications to support this work. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. School leaders and the governing body know the needs of the school and local community very well. Links with other communities in the United Kingdom and globally are as yet under-developed. The very positive partnerships with parents and carers are an exceptional feature of the school. Regular 'share' opportunities during the school day are provided for parents and carers to experience learning activities alongside their children in school. The parents' and carers'

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views are sought regularly, enabling highly effective communication and engagement and also providing them with a means to be involved actively in decision-making.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, providing children with a positive start in their early learning and development. Good links with parents and carers and with the pre-school on the school site enable children to settle quickly and make good progress in all areas of learning. The outdoor shared space is used effectively to prepare children for their first year in school. Children learn to play together, taking turns and sharing well, developing good relationships with adults and other children. By the time they start in Year 1, they have reached a good level of achievement.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, ensuring that planning reflects an understanding of how young children learn. For example, the outdoor classroom is used well to promote independence and provide memorable learning experiences for children. During one session, the children put on 'wellies' and raincoats excitedly in preparation for an outdoor activity. Attention to the safety and welfare of the children was a high priority when the Early Years Foundation Stage leader explained they needed to collect 'snappy sticks' in order to build and make a camp fire. Children enjoyed thoroughly the freedom to search around for the materials to make their fire and explained confidently why their sticks were 'snappy'! All adults support children's learning well. Assessment information is used effectively to support the next steps in learning and there is a good balance of activities that are led by adults and others initiated by children.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. Their views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. All who responded agreed that their children are kept safe and the vast majority believed that the school helps their children to live a healthy lifestyle. They agreed also that their children enjoy school and that teaching was good. Very few expressed concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and their children's preparation for the future and some felt that they are not informed about their children's progress, or that the school does not meet their children's particular needs. Inspectors explored those issues during the inspection and found that pupils' behaviour is good and the needs of particular pupils are met satisfactorily. They found that pupils make satisfactory progress and endorse the view that pupils should be making faster progress. Inspectors found that systems to inform parents and carers about their children's progress are good.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mark Church of England First 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 143 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	70	34	29	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	94	80	24	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	72	61	44	37	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	50	55	47	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	65	40	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	79	67	38	32	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	64	42	36	1	1	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)	72	61	40	34	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	67	36	31	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	37	68	58	4	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	58	44	37	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	80	68	36	31	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	73	31	26	1	1	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Mark Church of England First School, Highbridge TA9 4QA**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and special thanks to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We found you extremely interesting to talk to and very polite and helpful. You spoke enthusiastically about your school and how much you enjoy learning.

These are some of the things the school does well.

- You get off to a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress.
- You have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- You feel safe in school and know there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem.
- You make a good contribution to your school and the local community.
- Your attendance is above average.

We have asked the school to work on two things to make your school even better.

- Improve the way the school's big plan is written, so each step of progress is measured and all school leaders take part in checking on the school's improvement.
- Use the assessments of your learning following lessons to plan for the next steps you will take and for you to know more about how you can improve your work, through teachers' marking and the targets set for you.

It was a privilege to visit your school. Continue to work hard and, most of all, enjoy your learning! Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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