

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112325
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	378463
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Naomi Taylor

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Duff
Headteacher	Peter Barfoot
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2009
School address	Oxenholme Lane Natland Kendal LA9 7QH
Telephone number	01539 560719
Fax number	01539 561769
Email address	admin@st-marks.cumbria.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed and eight teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including that relating to safeguarding, assessment and progress, and school policies. They analysed 99 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with a sample from staff and pupils.

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

- How well the information gained from the analysis of pupils' attainment and progress is used to set work that fully matches their individual needs.
- How effectively the curriculum is planned to provide opportunities in all subjects to develop numeracy and literacy skills, particularly in writing.
- How well balanced are the adult and children-led activities in Early Years Foundation Stage, both indoors and outdoors.
- How well pupils behave in and around the school.

Information about the school

St Mark's is a smaller than average primary school serving a wide area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. Most pupils are White British but there is a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the normal times. There is a breakfast and after-school club held on the school premises. This provision is not managed by the school and was not part of this inspection.

The school has many awards and has recently been re-accredited with Healthy School status. The school is a member of the new Kendal Collaborative Partnership.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mark's is a good school with a friendly and welcoming environment. The headteacher has established a good climate for learning and a clear focus on raising achievement. The school has been working with the local authority as part of the Improving School Programme and school improvement strategies have been implemented very effectively. As a result, teaching is predominantly good overall and the rates of progress of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are increasing. Attainment is broadly in line with the national average and improving. An overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school and say their children enjoy coming to school.

Pupils are polite and friendly and behave well in lessons and around school. They feel safe and have confidence that adults will deal with any concerns. They have an exceptionally good understanding of healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the good take-up of extra-curricular sports activities. Attendance is above average.

Relationships are warm and encouraging and promote self-esteem. Lessons are well planned and often provide different activities to meet the needs of pupils' varying abilities. On the few occasions when this is not the case, lessons lack pace and pupils become distracted. Most lessons provide regular opportunities for pupils to assess their learning but this is not always the case. The curriculum provides many opportunities for the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills across all age ranges. The opportunity for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently limited to mornings. Teachers work with parents and carers to show how they can support their child's learning at home. Pastoral care is exceptionally strong and support for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding, with extensive work with a range of partners. Teaching assistants work closely with the teachers to provide well-targeted interventions to effectively tackle underachievement.

Self-evaluation is robust and thorough. New systems for tracking, monitoring and evaluating, to better inform target-setting for individuals and to ensure that areas for development are identified quickly, have been successfully implemented. Strategies, such as interventions, are evaluated carefully to check that they are having a positive impact. These successful developments indicate a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, so that all lessons are consistently good and more are outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have well-paced activities that meet the needs of all pupils and maximise their potential
 - increasing the opportunities for group, peer- and self-assessment so that pupils always know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Ensure access to outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is available throughout the school day.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

A very large majority of pupils enjoy school and as a result, their attendance is above average. They say they learn a lot in lessons and as a result, they make good progress. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the number of pupils participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. They work well independently and collaboratively. Behaviour observed around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils are polite and respectful to their peers and to adults. They say they feel safe, reporting that there is very little bullying and any that occurs is dealt with effectively. Through activities, such as raising money for local, national and overseas charities, pupils show their commitment to supporting others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities as monitors and the older pupils happily support the new children who have recently joined the Reception class.

Children enter the school with skills, particularly in writing, that are below the national expectation for their age. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and enjoy their learning. They particularly enjoy project work, such as the Second World War. The opportunity to make choices about researching aspects of the impact on peoples' lives saw some pupils eagerly researching the women's land army on the internet. Others were highly motivated creating a ration book, while at the same time developing their writing skills. The school sets appropriate and challenging targets. Its accurate prediction of attainment shows that pupils' progress is accelerating and this was evident during the inspection. Progress and achievement across the school are good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress and some even better.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2

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

The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The lessons observed showed that teaching is mainly good or better. There were a few outstanding and satisfactory lessons. Teachers plan their lessons well and make good use of resources to ensure that pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. In the vast majority of lessons work proceeds at a brisk pace and is well matched to pupils' needs. In Year 1, pupils enjoyed exploring two-dimensional shapes, extending their numeracy and literacy skills as a group, before working in smaller groups with teachers and teaching assistants to suit their level of ability. The more-able pupils are confident to work independently at times and enjoy finding out things for themselves. The monitoring of individual learning, carried out by teachers and teaching assistants, is thorough and informs lesson planning well overall. Occasionally, however, teachers' plans do not vary the activities enough to suit all groups of pupils. When this is the case, the lessons lack pace and pupils become a little distracted. In a few lessons, there were not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved in group, peer- or self-assessment of their work. An effective system to track pupils' progress is in place, and used well to plan interventions for individuals or small groups in order to boost their progress. There is regular, appropriate marking of work to explain to pupils how they are progressing and what they can do to improve. This raises pupils' ambitions to progress and aim even higher. The school is effective in identifying, and supporting in lessons, the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable. The work of the teachers and teaching assistants is effective in ensuring that all groups progress well.

The curriculum is well planned and provides opportunities throughout for the development of numeracy, literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There is an appropriate whole-school focus on developing writing and raising the number of pupils achieving Level 5 in Year 6. The curriculum is enriched with opportunities in sport, music and much more. There are visits to a range of stimulating places and the pupils talked enthusiastically about visits to Beatrix Potter's home, the Football Museum in Preston and the residential trip for the older pupils. These opportunities contribute greatly to the personal and social development of pupils. A piece of woodland nearby is used to develop forest school activities and photographic evidence seen during the inspection demonstrates how much this is enjoyed by the pupils.

Exceptional care, guidance and support make a strong contribution to pupils' progress and to all aspects of their personal development. The school works

extremely well with external agencies to ensure that the potentially most vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the expert help they need. Excellent transition arrangements ensure that pupils move smoothly between different stages of their education. This was evident during the inspection by how well the young children have settled into the Reception class and how much this is appreciated by parents and carers and by the eager sense of anticipation of the Year 6 pupils moving to secondary schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The good leadership, management and the commitment by all staff, the governing body and the local authority, have been instrumental in bringing about recent successful strategies for improvement in the school. The improvements to the quality of care, guidance and support and the precise use of assessment data to monitor, track and plan challenging targets for individual pupils are accelerating their progress and achievement. The headteacher has a very clear ambitious vision for further improvement which is shared by staff and the governing body. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved. The overall effective self-evaluation by school leaders since the last inspection demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve. The governing body knows the school well and provides valuable support and challenge at a strategic and operational level. Excellent partnerships with external agencies and other schools support and enhance the pupils' learning well. Safeguarding arrangements are good and staff are well trained. The school adopts good practice in the areas of risk assessment and child protection. The school works hard to identify any underachievement and is quick to implement initiatives to close gaps. Consequently, all are given equal opportunity to succeed. The school promotes community cohesion well within the local community. It has yet to fully develop this work further afield, including in Britain, to ensure pupils' understanding of communities and cultures which are different from their own.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although attainment on entry to the school varies, the overall level of children's skills when they start in the Reception class is below average, particularly in writing. Numeracy skills are slightly higher than average. As seen during the inspection, children settle very quickly and are soon happy and secure as a result of exceptionally good induction arrangements. This is very much appreciated by parents and carers one of whom responded on the Ofsted questionnaire with, 'If this is the start, then my child's journey is going to be wonderful'. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1 attainment is closer to average. Overall, children are provided for well. They have many opportunities to explore for themselves and develop independent learning, both in and outside the classroom, but they do not currently have access to the outdoor area throughout the whole school day. The children enjoy being at school, play happily with their friends and form good relationships with adults. They are well taught and there is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. Their progress is assessed carefully and their individual needs met. The whole-school focus on improving writing starts in Reception and there was evidence of this during the inspection with picture signs created by children, for example, 'this way to outdoor play' which the teacher had then written key words on. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers say their children enjoy coming to school and the vast majority of them believe that teaching is good at St Mark's. Some whose children have just joined Reception class told inspectors that they are really pleased with how well their children have settled into school. 'My son loves his new school' wrote one parent in response to the Ofsted questionnaire. A very small minority expressed concerns about how unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. The inspectors have seen evidence of a revised behaviour management policy, and clear systems and records for dealing with unacceptable behaviour are used effectively, resulting in pupils' overall good behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's CofE 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 **99** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 153 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	63	32	32	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	69	27	27	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	56	37	37	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	51	38	38	8	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	62	36	36	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	59	29	29	8	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	62	35	35	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)	48	48	44	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	57	33	33	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	42	40	40	11	11	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	49	36	36	7	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	54	55	39	39	3	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	66	31	31	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School, Kendal, LA9 7QH

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when the team came to inspect your school recently. A particular thank you to those of you who gave your time to talk to us about how much you enjoy your work and the many activities you take part in outside of lessons. You made a valuable contribution to the inspection.

You attend a good school where the staff do all they can to support and encourage you. The care you receive is excellent and enhanced by very strong partnerships with other agencies beyond school. You respond by behaving well and working hard. The teaching you receive is good. You make good progress and are becoming responsible and thoughtful young people, and you have an excellent understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. You are good at helping each other in school and you told us how much you enjoy your lessons.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly in a welcoming and caring environment. The work done by staff in this area of the school is also good. We have suggested that providing access to the outdoor area throughout the day would enhance children's learning even more.

We have asked that in lessons your teachers give you even more opportunities for you to assess your own work and that of others. This, together with a good range of activities provided consistently across all lessons, will help to raise your attainment further and help to ensure that you reach your full potential.

You can help by continuing to attend school regularly and working with staff to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Lead inspector

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