

St Mark's Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126364
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	381218
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Neech HMI
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Paisey
Headteacher	Gareth Flemington
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons, covering all 12 classes. A number of lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, and one observation with an assistant headteacher. The team completed 'learning walks' with senior leaders, which focused on behaviour, the curriculum and community cohesion. Inspectors held discussions with staff, pupils, governors, and parents and carers. They looked at documentation provided by the school, including records of pupils' progress and school improvement planning. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. The team considered responses to the inspection questionnaires that were received from 11 staff, 200 pupils and 107 parents and carers.

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

- How well the school is securing progress for pupils in English and mathematics.
- How effectively teachers use assessment information to plan teaching, set high expectations and identify challenging targets so that pupils make at least good progress.
- How successfully leaders and managers drive school improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average-size primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately one third of the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. There are three classes in each year group. The school shares the site with the infant school. There is a special school, run by the local authority on the adjoining site. The majority of pupils are White British. The school holds the Healthy Schools Plus Status. Since the last inspection, there have been alterations to the school grounds to provide a new playground and pedestrian path for access around the school playing field.

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. Outcomes for pupils are outstanding. Parents and carers report that their children are very enthusiastic learners because of the excellent quality care, guidance and support they receive. The good partnership with the infant school ensures pupils' smooth transition. One parent expressed the views of many by saying that transition, 'is good because it is like one big school'. Pupils' exemplary behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning. As a result of this and the good quality teaching, they make good progress. Since the previous inspection, major improvements to the safety of the school grounds, such as the newly sited playground, and clear pedestrian route around the school field, have had a significant impact. Consequently, pupils report that they feel very safe in school. Pupils begin in Year 3 with levels in reading, writing and mathematics that are above the national average. All pupils, including the most able, make good progress, and by the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 their performance in English and mathematics is well above national expectations.

A key strength of the school's work is the way in which staff respond to pupils' individual needs. Very effective strategies and interventions provide targeted support for pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable or at risk of underachieving. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and, as a result, progress well.

The good teaching ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and attend well. Teachers plan exciting and engaging activities. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of enrichment activities available to them. The school is highly effective at encouraging pupils to lead healthy lives and to promote health issues for others, for example through the pupil-generated healthy eating schemes led by the school council. This excellent work is reflected in the award of Healthy Schools Plus Status. Pupils get along together extremely well. As a result, they consistently follow the school behaviour code in lessons and at play times. Pupils participate very confidently in music and drama opportunities. Parents and carers appreciate the high quality plays and musical events produced by the school, such as the outstanding Year 3 Christmas performance. In assemblies, pupils reflect on their own beliefs through stories and songs. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school's work are outstanding.

Changes to the system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress mean that school leaders are setting high expectations to further accelerate pupils' progress. However,

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the use of targets for English and mathematics in lessons is variable across the school. Not all pupils are routinely given clear guidance about the level they are working at and how to improve their work.

Since the previous inspection, the school has quickly identified inconsistencies in its own practice and put actions in place. Effective leadership, including governance, has ensured a high commitment to the well-being of all pupils and means that safeguarding procedures are outstanding. The recent change to the leadership structure of the school, with the appointment of two assistant headteachers, is having a positive impact on school improvement. This, together with the effective teaching, pupils' excellent behaviour, the vision and commitment of staff and governors based on accurate self-evaluation, means that the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012 ensure that all pupils have targets for English and mathematics that:
 - link clearly to National Curriculum levels
 - are based on ongoing assessment in lessons
 - help to ensure that pupils have next steps and know what they need to do to improve their own work
 - are reviewed and updated regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The vast majority of pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant school. When pupils start in Year 3, they build on their performance from Key Stage 1 and make good progress in English and mathematics. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2, approximately half of all pupils achieve National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics that are well above those expected nationally for their age. School data and tracking information show that the school is set to maintain the above-average performance for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities work hard and achieve well in lessons. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils confidently converted a numerical problem into a two-step word problem, wrote the problem on the board, and explained it to the rest of the class.

The thoughtful and considerate behaviour of pupils has an outstanding impact on their progress in lessons. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson pupils worked in pairs to investigate parallel and series electric circuits in order to solve problems set by the teacher. As a result of discussing ideas based on their prior knowledge and listening well to one another, pupils made good progress in their knowledge of how electricity works. Some pupils talk about their targets in English and mathematics,

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but this is not consistent in all classes. The school recognises that pupils are generally unsure of the levels at which they are working and the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Consequently, this is an area for improvement.

Pupils feel very safe in school. They say that bullying in school rarely occurs and that isolated instances are dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils are aware of the steps the school has taken to promote their safety, such as those relating to internet safety. Pupils are very confident in the support they receive from staff and know who to talk to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils' excellent behaviour is underpinned by a well-established moral code that enables them to develop a mature and responsible approach to their daily lives. In a Year 5 religious education lesson pupils reflected on their interpretation of a 'message of hope' by designing their own symbols. This encouraged pupils to think about their own beliefs and feelings very well. Pupils' contribution to cultural and religious opportunities is of high quality. In a performance of '*Hosanna Rocks*' youngsters acted their parts with mature sincerity. They played musical instruments, such as drums and flutes with impressive confidence.

Pupils contribute well towards the school and local community. Through the partnership with the neighbouring special school, pupils from both schools regularly meet together to experience joint fun activities. In this way pupils have a well-developed understanding of the inclusive nature of their community. They enjoy being active and are proud to represent their school in sports activities, such as competing against other schools. The school council makes an effective contribution to the life of the community, such as discussing school issues with councils in other schools. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about business, enterprise and worldwide issues through their involvement in local and national charity events. They are keen to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and design their own web pages at the popular lunchtime computer club. In this way pupils are applying their good basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT to real-life situations.

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	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

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

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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	1

How effective is the provision?

Within the school's effective quality of provision, teaching is at its best when teachers use assessment information to plan tasks which challenge pupils and are clearly matched to individual needs. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson which focused on poetry, the teacher skilfully linked lesson planning to previous learning. In this way pupils were challenged to use their knowledge of similes in their poems. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. As a result, they use questions in lessons effectively to reshape tasks and help pupils to overcome successfully any misconceptions about their learning. Teachers use praise well. This creates a positive atmosphere for learning where pupils are confident to try new ideas. In the most effective lessons, teachers routinely use ongoing assessment to provide pupils with feedback about how well they are doing. However, feedback linked to pupils' National Curriculum levels and targets for English and mathematics is less consistent. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good, as a result of a whole-school review of the marking policy. A comprehensive system of symbols for marking, such as indicating spelling and grammar mistakes, is consistently used. Conferencing is used well to talk to individuals about their work. However, in lessons, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to refer to pupils' targets and talk about the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work.

Interventions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very effective. Regular support is given to families and this supports pupils' good attendance and their academic achievement. The nurture groups offered in the Garden Room provide high quality social and emotional support for pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable or at risk of underachieving.

The good curriculum is strengthened by wide-ranging enrichment and practical activities. Through partnership working with a local theatre, pupils experience an understanding of lighting, script writing, and scene production. Pupils make their own theatre boxes as a homework project and this links drama and literacy with design and technology. Parents and carers comment on how much they enjoy the opportunities provided to learn with their children. For example, the 'Survival Day' encouraged families to be involved in developing life skills and resourcefulness, such as building a shelter. While the curriculum is effective, there is sometimes less opportunity provided for pupils to understand and review their subject targets in English and mathematics in lessons, in order to improve their work.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

Leaders and managers, including governors, have successfully promoted a culture of equal opportunity. They have continued to drive school improvement based on accurate self-evaluation and a thorough review of actions taken. One such example is moving Year 3 pupils from an outside classroom into the main building. This has had a significant impact on developing transition arrangements for the youngest pupils. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and the areas that need to be improved. The creation of the central 'Reading Oasis' and purchase of new books has re-energised pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Systems of tracking and the regular review of how well individuals are achieving mean that teachers are accountable for maintaining and building on the effective progress of pupils in their classes. School leaders set challenging targets. Consequently, high expectations from leaders and managers demonstrate an ambitious drive to ensure all pupils have an equal chance to achieve as well as they can. However, the school acknowledges that current use of targets set by teachers for pupils in English and mathematics is inconsistent, and does not routinely provide all pupils in lessons with the information they need to improve their own learning.

The partnership with families is good. Parents and carers report that the school 'goes out of its way' to support them. For example, the work of the support adviser makes a significant contribution to the high quality support the school offers, and links well with the good partnership that exists with the neighbouring infant school. Community cohesion is good. From experiencing a rich curriculum, including national and international themes, pupils consider a range of world religions and cultures.

The governing body is committed to promoting the achievement and well-being of pupils and in this they have been successful. They have been particularly effective in ensuring safeguarding procedures are very robust. Child protection procedures are transparent and staff and governors' training is regularly updated. Pupils' safety is high priority and runs through all aspects of the school's work. Significant actions taken to provide a safe and secure play area for pupils, together with regular risk assessments, mean that this aspect of the school's work is exemplary.

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These are the grades for 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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Approximately one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded were positive about the work of the school. Those who wrote to the lead inspector praised the care, guidance and support provided for their children and commented on how much their children enjoy coming to school and felt very safe. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns that their children did not always make enough progress. The inspection evidence confirmed the majority of parents' and carers' views of pupils' progress overall as good. The school is aware of the few inconsistencies in setting targets for pupils in English and mathematics in order for them to improve their work and this is an area for development.

Parents and carers considered staff to be approachable and communication to be good. A small minority expressed concerns about the school's engagement with parents and carers. The inspection evidence found that the school has improved its engagement with parents and carers since the last inspection and that this aspect of the school's work is good. At the end of the inspection, an extremely small minority of parents and carers wrote to the lead inspector expressing concerns about bullying in school. During the inspection, the team talked to pupils and observed behaviour in lessons, at playtimes, during an assembly and at a performance for parents and carers. Inspectors observed pupils treating one another with respect and following the school's behaviour code at all times.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's Church of England Junior 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 327 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	58	44	41	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	70	32	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	39	62	58	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	44	54	50	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	65	61	40	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	45	55	51	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	39	63	59	0	0	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)	56	52	43	40	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	52	45	42	5	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	39	49	46	7	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	43	45	42	12	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	61	57	39	36	4	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	61	36	34	5	5	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 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 2009/10 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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England Junior School, Salisbury, SP1 3BL

Thank you for making the inspection team welcome on our recent visit. We came to see how well you are all learning. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and what it is like to be a pupil in your school. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

You, your parents and carers, and your headteacher told us that St Mark's is a good school and you are right, it is. The adults help you to settle in well when you start in Year 3 and take very good care of you. You behave very well in school. You are very knowledgeable about how to keep yourselves safe and healthy. We were very impressed by your music and drama contributions in your outstanding Christmas production of *Hosanna Rocks*. Your parents and carers were also very pleased with your performance.

You enjoy your lessons and are taught well. Your teachers plan lessons in English and mathematics which help you to make good progress. Many of you take part in clubs and after-school activities. Teachers praise your efforts and mark the work in your books well. However, not all of your teachers talk about your targets in English and mathematics lessons and the next steps for you to take to improve your work.

Mr Flemington, the staff and the school's governors all want to make the school even better. We have suggested they focus on making sure that you all have regularly reviewed targets for English and mathematics so that you know what you need to do to improve your own work.

For you, the most important things are to carry on working hard and treating each other with respect so that you are ready for the future.

You have all our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector

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