

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106452
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377403
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2012
Lead inspector	Louise Murphy

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	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Martin Deurden
Headteacher	Glen Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Louise Murphy
Joanna Sharpe

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited seven teachers in their classrooms and observed 13 lessons. They listened to children read, observed the teaching of letters and sounds and observed guided reading in Key Stage 1. Meetings were held with a member of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the work of pupils in their books and on display around the school. They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the raising attainment plan, records on safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and pupils' progress data. It was not possible to take account of the responses on Parent View the on-line questionnaire as there were not enough responses registered. However, inspectors examined questionnaire responses from pupils and staff as well as 77 completed by parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-size primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Most pupils are of White British heritage with a small though increasing number of pupils from other minority-ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. A considerable number of pupils join and leave the school at times other than the normal time of entry in Reception and leaving at the end of Year 6. The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has achieved Customer Services Excellence Award, Eco-school Green Flag, Healthy Schools, Leading Parent Partnership Award, Active Mark, Church and School Partnership Award and is accredited under the Financial Management Standard in Schools. The school provides a breakfast club each morning during term time. The deputy headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term and a new appointment is planned during the summer term.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It provides a friendly, welcoming environment in which to learn. Most children's skills are well below expectations for their age when they join the Reception class. Pupils make good progress and attain standards that are broadly average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Good teaching with few relative shortcomings is a key factor contributing to the good achievement and positive personal development of the pupils. Teachers regularly review how they work to ensure the individual needs of pupils are met. Despite these checks, there are occasions when tasks are not matched fully to pupil ability. In lessons which are good or outstanding, every minute of the lesson is used productively and, for example, pupils contribute ideas for extending their own learning. There are times however, when pupils do not fully understand exactly what is expected of them and this slows the lesson as they seek further explanation from the teacher.
- Pupils are cared for and valued. They feel safe and behave well around the school. Pupils have a positive attitude toward learning and are able to work together effectively in pairs and in small groups.
- The headteacher has a strong sense of purpose. His ambition for the school is shared by a well-informed and active governing body. The headteacher leads the staff effectively and they work well together as a cohesive team. Staff work hard to provide the best for pupils, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who, as a result, make outstanding progress. Teaching quality is monitored and improved across the curriculum. There is currently an emphasis on developing learning outside the classroom. This is in the early stages but is already having a positive impact on learning.
- The school is not yet outstanding because teaching does not always pitch work consistently at the right levels for all pupils to achieve their best and the curriculum does not include sufficient opportunities for children to learn of other cultures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all lessons are consistently good or outstanding by:
 - planning tasks that are always accurately matched to pupil ability
 - ensuring teachers use all lesson time to full effect.
- Enrich the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that pupils learn more about other cultures.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good. They are eager to learn and offer their ideas in pairs or group discussions. The children enter Reception class from a variety of settings, often with little or no nursery experience. A good emphasis is placed on linking letters and sounds; children become confident in sounding out words and this inspires them to read books from the wide range available to them. There is a mix of adult-led and independent activities carefully planned to appeal to the interests of the children. For example, they went on a spring walk and when they returned a group worked independently and carefully planted spring flowers to produce their own garden area because as they said 'flowers are so beautiful'.

From their starting points, children make good progress in Reception and start Year 1 below the expected level. The majority of pupils who remain with the school throughout Key Stage 1 make at least the expected level of progress, including in reading where they attain just below average for their age. Achievement at Key Stage 2 is stronger and pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 6 attainment is average in reading as it is in English and mathematics. Occasionally achievement, particularly in writing at both key stages, is less secure because activities are not consistently matched to pupil ability to ensure the appropriate level of challenge.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the prompt assessment and very well-targeted support they receive. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make good progress by the end of Year 6, especially in English, because of the well designed opportunities to talk and listen included in lessons. Most parents and carers agree that their children make good progress at the school. This is an accurate view.

Quality of teaching

Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals use existing knowledge and understanding to support current learning. This is because teachers' planning for the curriculum and lessons is well differentiated overall and ensures that lessons build on previous learning. They make sure that pupils who have missed learning are brought up to the level of others in their group, either by one-to-one discussions with the teacher or an explanation by a member of the class. Teachers use questioning skills well

to challenge pupils and extend their learning. Assessment is used effectively; targets are set for different groups and marking indicates what pupils need to do to achieve their targets. Teachers often match activities to meet the needs of pupil groups but this is not always the case. There are times when activities are too easy or too hard which can limit pupils' progress.

In the best lessons a brisk pace is maintained and sufficient time is given to pupils to discuss their ideas and opinions with others. However, there are times when too much 'teacher talk' results in some pupils losing concentration. The pupils then do not fully understand what is expected of them. This slows the pace of learning within the lesson.

Teaching impacts positively on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Social skills are enhanced by the opportunities for small group and paired discussions. There are good relationships between staff and pupils. Every opportunity is taken to build on the inquisitive nature of pupils by appealing to their interests. For example, children in Reception noticed that a water feature in the school grounds had frozen and produced wonderful ice patterns. They could not wait to touch and feel it; they then built a model of the frozen sculpture which they were very proud of. A photograph remains to remind the children of their experience.

Information and communication technology is well used both as a teaching tool and by learners across the curriculum. Following a trip to the park one teacher used photographs of the walk displayed on the interactive whiteboard to support the group of pupils to sequence the journey. The children enthusiastically developed and wrote sentences to match the photographs. Pupils agree that their teachers help them to learn and the majority of parents and carers believe that their children are well taught, inspectors concur.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Observations in lessons and around the school, together with examination of the school's systematic behaviour monitoring system confirm that behaviour is good. The relationships between pupils are good. Pupils take on responsibilities such as school and class captain and school councillor with enthusiasm. Pupils are proud that they contribute to school life. For example, after consulting other pupils, the school councillors recently used their budget to buy a stage for the school hall.

A small number of pupils commented negatively regarding behaviour and safety when completing questionnaires. This was not the case with those pupils who were asked directly by inspectors. All pupils said that they felt safe in school and that behaviour was good. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and considered they had witnessed no such behaviours in school. They felt that if there was bullying staff would deal with it quickly.

The majority of pupils were courteous and responsive during the inspection but a few pupils appeared to lack confidence, for example, when talking to the inspectors. School works effectively in partnership with parents and carers. Attendance is average. The breakfast club gets the day off to a good start and contributes toward improving punctuality. All parents responding to the questions on safety agreed that the school looked after their children well and that they felt safe. Most agreed that behaviour is good. This is an accurate view.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leadership team, staff and the governing body share the drive to improve the life chances of pupils at the school. To achieve this, pupils' progress is tracked closely and extra help provided when necessary. Assessment data identifies the success of such support, which addresses both learning and personal development. Effective professional development has allowed leadership responsibilities to be delegated and teaching is diligently monitored in all areas of the curriculum. Review meetings take place regularly between class teachers and subject leaders to ensure that teachers are held accountable for pupil progress. This has successfully involved more staff in taking responsibility for school improvement. There is a strong trend in school improvement and the capacity to improve is good.

The governing body maintains a high profile within the school. Governors have links with different classes and subjects. For one day each year all of the governors spend the day at the school and they listen to the views and opinions of the pupils and establish and renew relationships with them. School leaders promote equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination; as a result there are no significant differences between the outcomes for pupil groups at the school. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and staff. Partnerships with parents and carers and the church ensure that the school is at the heart of the community. Partnerships with other agencies such as health professionals and the local authority link teacher contribute to pupil progress and well-being.

The curriculum is good and extended by the range of after school activities. It provides well for the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils; however, cultural aspects are not so well developed. Learning about other cultures often has a historical basis and is not enriched by ensuring children have the opportunity to learn of contemporary cultures, especially those represented within the school population. Learning outside the classroom is in development and staff have had training and support to deliver the range of lessons outdoors. This is having a positive impact on pupils, especially those who might otherwise become easily distracted in the classroom environment. For example, the teacher of a class learning about compass points during an outdoor mathematics lesson found that all of the pupils were able to achieve the learning outcome and believed that this was as a result of the experiential learning activity.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School, Wigan WN5 9DS

Thank you so much for the friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school.

Yours is a good school, but we know that you already know this because you told us how much you enjoy your friends and your lessons and how your teachers help you to learn. We think there are some changes that the school can make to improve your progress even more and these are:

- To make sure that all of you are always challenged at the right level
- For you to learn more about people from other cultures.

You could help your teachers with this by letting them know when you do and do not understand things and by telling them of any culture that you would be interested in learning about.

It was a delight to visit your school and I am confident that you will continue to play your part in making your school even better. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Louise Murphy
Lead inspector

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