

St Mark's C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116342
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	379235
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Saunders

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nico Caltabiano
Headteacher	Anne Steele Arnett
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 February 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders	Additional inspector
Susan Hunnings	Additional inspector
Richard Sutton	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 16 teachers, including sessions to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language. Observations totalled 12 hours. Members of the inspection team met with groups of pupils, teachers and members of the governing body and spoke to parents and carers informally. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documents demonstrating the school's self-evaluation, systems to track the progress of pupils, records of monitoring the quality of teaching, teachers' planning and the 71 inspection questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

In September 2010 the school changed from a junior to a primary school and opened an Early Years Foundation Stage comprising two Reception classes. Consequently the school is now larger than average; however there are no Year 2 classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. About half of pupils come from a wide range of different heritages and many more pupils than usual speak English as an additional language. A few of these pupils join the school at the early stages of learning to speak English. A high proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than at the expected times. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average; the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress. The breakfast club and an after-school club are run by the governing body and were included as part of this inspection. The school has been awarded the silver Science Quality mark.

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. Since the last inspection achievement has risen, teaching has improved, and the headteacher has developed a widely shared vision to give pupils the best possible opportunities. The highly successful development of an Early Years Foundation Stage means this aspect of the school is outstanding. The school is not yet outstanding overall because very occasionally satisfactory teaching constrains the progress of some pupils, particularly those who are more able. Although improved, attendance remains below average.
- Achievement is good because attainment in all subjects has continued to rise steadily and is now close to the national average although attainment in writing is not as good as in reading and mathematics. Even so, all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make outstanding progress because of the support they receive.
- The focus on sharing best practice means that teaching has improved and is now usually good or better. Teachers use the information they have about how well pupils are doing to plan tasks that match their needs. Occasionally some teachers allow the pace of lessons to slow when they spend too long explaining tasks.
- Although the standard of pupils' behaviour is good, developing a consistent approach to effectively managing the challenging behaviour of a few pupils remains a school focus. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they have a well-developed perspective on how to keep themselves safe.
- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher means that the transition into a primary school has gone smoothly. There is a strong sense of teamwork and leadership is well distributed so that the management of performance is shared. Overall leadership is good. The caring ethos and high ambition for all are exemplified through the emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural

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development of each pupil and the well-planned curriculum that meets the needs of all groups of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment within a year, particularly in writing and for more able pupils, to match that in reading by:
 - ensuring that the recently introduced strategies for improving attainment are consistently implemented by all teachers.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching within a year by:
 - ensuring that all lessons proceed at a good pace
 - increasing the independence of pupils in undertaking challenging work.
- Improve attendance to broadly average by working with families to ensure that all parents and carers fully understand the importance of their children attending school regularly.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Before the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage children joined the school in Reception with skills and knowledge which were typically lower than the levels expected, particularly in speaking and listening. The outstanding provision in the new Early Years Foundation Stage means that they make rapid progress and children currently in Reception have made up ground and are above age-related expectations in mathematics. For example, reception children delighted in being able to accurately write out numerous subtraction sums. Pupils in Year 1 make good progress in lessons because the work teachers give them is engaging and pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards learning. These pupils are confident readers and their reading ability is above average.

During the majority of lessons observed, pupils made good progress because teachers had accurate information about pupils' skills and knowledge and used this to plan work which challenged most pupils. Pupils who enter the school for the first time in Year 3 typically join with skills and knowledge which are below average levels. They make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach standards of attainment which have risen steadily and are now close to the national average in English and mathematics. Their attainment in reading is slightly above expectations. The focus on developing a love of reading has been very effective and pupils throughout the school show appreciation of a wide range of authors and genres. Recent strategies to improve writing are starting to increase the rate of progress for pupils although these are not yet consistently implemented and so have not had as much impact as strategies to improve pupils' attainment in reading. The emphasis on using practical apparatus and resources to develop numeracy skills and problem

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solving is helping to improve pupils' mathematical ability. Occasionally the pace of some lessons slows and more-able pupils, in particular, do not make as rapid progress as they might. The gap between the performance of girls and boys evident in the previous year has been successfully addressed and is now similar to that seen nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in all subject areas because of the highly effective adult support they get. This develops their independence and ensures they are challenged to the level of their ability, not constrained by their ability in English. The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are accurately identified and they are well supported by experienced adults and through an extensive network of partnerships. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

Parents and carers across the school agree that their children are making good progress. Some parents and carers commented how well their particular child's needs had been met.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers agree that pupils are well taught. Lesson observations and the school's records of monitoring show that teaching is good over time because teachers use the accurate information they have about the needs of all groups of pupils to plan carefully the tasks pupils are given to do. Lessons are typically delivered with enthusiasm and usually proceed at a good pace, because teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of strategies to engage pupils, such as encouraging pupils to talk in pairs and jot down ideas. During the few less effective lessons the pace slows or teachers spend too long explaining the tasks and progress is constrained. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to assess how well pupils have grasped the concepts covered and monitor how well they are succeeding with the tasks they have to do. In the best lessons adults use good questioning to probe pupils' understanding, and adapt their explanations in the light of this. Pupils in a Year 4 lesson were encouraged to decide when they felt they understood enough of the explanation to undertake the tasks. However, such independence is not always as evident and occasionally pupils are too reliant on adults to tell them what they need to do next or what resources they might use to tackle a problem. Increasingly, pupils have opportunities to reflect on how well they have achieved their targets, give each other feedback, and respond to helpful comments made by the teachers in the pupils' books.

Adults who support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well trained and provide support which balances carefully the need for additional help with the need to develop independence. Provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given the highest priority and consequently pupils show great appreciation of their local environment and for the wide range of different cultures represented. Teachers are reflective about the quality of their lessons and there is a shared determination to improve, through evaluating work together, observing each other teach and receiving support from particularly effective colleagues.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are particularly polite towards visitors and adults and get along with one another amicably almost all the time. During lessons, pupils show good attitudes to learning and are interested in the work they are given to do. Occasionally a few pupils become distracted when the pace of lessons slows, but they quickly refocus when reminded. When asked, pupils explained that any issues with behaviour are dealt with quickly by caring adults within the school. Records show that good behaviour is typical over time. A very few parents and carers indicated that they felt incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are not always dealt with, but inspectors found that the school has well-established systems for pupils to report their worries or concerns and that the school responds quickly and effectively when any concerns are raised. Pupils show good understanding of how to stay safe and about safety issues. They are well aware of different forms of bullying, such as physical and cyber-bullying, and what they can do to help prevent it, or how to report it.

Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are particularly well supported by caring staff and consequently helped to contribute more positively towards the community. Pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes towards one another and are understanding of the very small number of other pupils who find good behaviour a challenge. The breakfast club run by the school helps those who attend to make a positive, healthy start to the day. The school works very closely with families to ensure that behaviour is managed consistently, and to encourage improved attendance. Attendance has slowly improved, because of the school's extensive strategies to tackle this. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has been reduced, but attendance remains below average overall. The very few pupils who are not at school as frequently as they should be do not achieve as well as they should.

Leadership and management

The school is led and managed well. The very strong leadership of the headteacher, ably assisted by her senior leaders, has provided the drive to improve outcomes for all pupils. There is a relentless focus on identifying specific areas for improvement and these are tackled with great determination. Leadership is now becoming increasingly well distributed as middle leaders develop their skills in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, identifying required improvements and implementing specific strategies to bring these about. Professional development for teaching staff is well linked to their performance management and is effective in improving teaching. The school is particularly adept at developing teachers new to the profession because of the very effective way they are supported. Good practice is shared and new ideas are implemented.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and leaders ensure that it meets pupils' needs and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All pupils, whatever their needs, are given the best possible opportunities to succeed and participate fully in school life because the school takes seriously the responsibility to

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promote equality and tackle discrimination. A wide range of visits, visitors and clubs available help pupils to widen their view of the world and develop their personal confidence. Extending the age range to include pupils from the age of four has been undertaken with care and consideration and is proving highly successful. Learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding because of the high quality of leadership and excellent teaching.

The headteacher and the governing body ensure that all statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe are in place and that all staff are well trained in the required procedures. Governance is good. Members of the governing body have an accurate view of the work of the school because of the information they receive and the challenge they provide to the school. Since the last inspection school leaders have tackled the issues raised and ensured that attainment continues to rise and that the well-being of all pupils is at the core of what the school does. These successes confirm that the school has the capacity to maintain the process of improvement.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

29 April 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Mark's C of E Primary School, Southampton SO15 5TE

We enjoyed talking to many of you and seeing the work you were doing while we were in your school. We were particularly impressed with how well you get along with one another and how much you enjoy learning. We have judged that your school is a good school.

Most of the teaching is good, because the teachers have lots of information about how well you are doing. They use this to plan work that is just hard enough. Younger pupils are making particularly impressive progress because the teaching is excellent. Overall, you make good progress across the school, but particularly so in reading. Teachers make sure that the work you have to do is interesting and are using new ideas to make sure you learn well. The writing project is helping you to improve your writing, and in mathematics you have more practical things to help you explore ideas. You told us that you feel the school looks after you well, and that pupils mostly behave well. We were impressed with how well a few of you, who find behaving well more difficult, are trying hard and being helped by the school.

Even though it is a good school, the headteacher and staff want it to be even better. These are the things we have asked them to do.

- Make sure that you do just as well in your writing as you are now doing in your reading and mathematics.
- Improve the teaching even further, so that it is more often outstanding, by making sure you get plenty to do during lessons and that you have more opportunities to decide what you should do for yourselves.
- Help all families to make sure you attend school as often as you possibly can and always arrive at school on time.

You can play your part in making your school even better by trying to do as much of your work as you can without getting the teachers to help you. Continue to get along with one another and enjoy your learning as you help to make your school such a good place to be.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders
Lead inspector

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