

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106104
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	377352
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2012
Lead inspector	Andrée Keddie

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sean Powell
Headteacher	Alison Whitehead
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Andree Keddle
John Shutt
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Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 11 teachers in 30 lessons of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff including senior leaders. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including safeguarding records, minutes of governing body meetings, the school improvement plan, policies, teachers' planning and assessment data showing pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed 82 questionnaires returned by parents and carers along with others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school and most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by the school is above average. The proportion supported by additional help from outside the school (School Action Plus) or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the government floor standard for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6. The school has achieved a number of awards including Arts Mark Gold, ICT Mark, Inclusion Mark and Healthy School status.

There is a separately-managed children's centre on site and the inspection report is available on the Ofsted website.

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	1

Key Findings

- This is a good school. As the result of outstanding leadership and management, standards are rising rapidly at each Key Stage. From starting points that are below those typical for their age, pupils attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, as demonstrated in the Year 6 statutory tests in English and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well-supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make good progress as a result. The school is not yet outstanding because pupils make good, rather than outstanding progress as the result of teaching that is good overall.
- Teaching is good with about a quarter of the teaching observed during the inspection judged as outstanding. In the best lessons, the pace of teaching is brisk and pupils are given well-structured opportunities to work collaboratively and to evaluate their own work against specific criteria, known as 'success criteria,' to assess how well they have achieved the objectives of the lesson. In less effective lessons, teachers spend too long giving instructions or explanations and this limits the time pupils have to work independently or collaboratively.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school and respond well to teachers' praise and encouragement. In the best lessons, pupils show high levels of interest and engagement and co-operate extremely well to support their learning. Attendance rates are below average over time but rising rapidly as the result of increased initiatives and partnership working with the education welfare service.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and excellent, well-embedded systems are in place to bring about further improvement. Since the last inspection, professional development and the performance management of staff to further improve the quality of teaching have been successful and standards are higher and rising. The governing body is very successful in holding the school to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to raise attainment by:
 - reducing the length of teachers' explanations and instructions in lessons and increasing the opportunities for pupils to work independently or collaboratively
 - ensuring that success criteria become embedded and are used to match closely pupils' learning activities to their prior skills and knowledge, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of their work
 - ensuring that the feedback in marking on how to improve is consistently good and that pupils have time to respond to it.
- Improve rates of attendance so that it is at least average by July 2013 and reduce the percentage of persistently absent pupils by:
 - further raising the profile of good attendance
 - embedding the partnership working with external agencies, such as the education welfare service.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the school with a level of skills and knowledge below that typical for children of their age. They make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they enter Key Stage 1, they are approaching average standards in their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills. Attainment in Key Stage 1 is improving and is a little below average. Standards in reading, however, are broadly average and a greater percentage of pupils are reading at the higher Level 3 than was the case nationally in 2011. Reading and writing skills are developed well through daily phonics sessions which enable children to learn about letters and the sounds they make. In one phonics session where the teaching was outstanding, Reception, children were very well challenged to write a sentence dictated to them by the teacher in which they had to apply what they had learned about the spelling of particular words. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Rates of progress are rising across the Key Stage with more pupils on track to reach the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics than previously.

Well-targeted intervention programmes and good teaching result in some pupils making greatly accelerated progress. For example, data show pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 making several months' improvement in their reading ages over a five-week period. In addition, pupils show good attitudes and understand a range of strategies they can use to help them with their reading.

Parents' and carers' questionnaires show that they are happy with their children's achievement. Inspection evidence confirms this and standards are rising. Analysis of data shows that there are no significant differences in the performance of particular groups. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive well-planned, focussed support and this ensures that they make good progress over time. Effective

questioning and encouragement from teachers, and well-deployed teaching assistants, help this group of pupils in particular, to develop their understanding and confidence in lessons.

Quality of teaching

Overall, teaching is good and there is some outstanding teaching in each Key Stage. Where teaching is good or better, the pace of learning is rapid and there are frequent opportunities for pupils to work either independently or collaboratively. In the most effective lessons, time is provided for pupils to assess their own learning against the success criteria and they do so effectively. The better lessons are lively and interactive and, as a result, pupils show excellent attitudes to learning and their motivation is high. This was seen in a lesson in Key Stage 1 when pupils were excited to receive an e-mail asking them to improve a book written by an author they had been learning about. They worked together to find other words to use instead of 'said' in order to make the story more interesting. In lessons, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well-supported by teachers and teaching assistants who structure their activities into gradual steps to ensure that they make good progress. In the questionnaires completed by parents and carers, almost all express positive views about the way their children are taught.

In the few lessons where the teaching is satisfactory, some teachers talk for too long, thereby limiting the time for the pupils to spend working independently or together on learning activities. In some lessons, teachers and pupils had identified the specific features (success criteria) that pupils needed to include in their work to meet the learning objectives successfully. However, occasionally these success criteria are applied to all pupils, rather than being modified to meet the needs of different groups, particularly the higher-attaining pupils.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through teaching which makes clear reference to what the school has called 'The 6Rs.' These are responsibility, relationships, reflection, resourcefulness, responsiveness and resilience. All lessons typically focus on one or two of these 6Rs as well as the subject content. Opportunities are created for pupils to reflect on issues and a good example of this was seen in Reception when children were asked to discuss the question 'Is it OK to steal?' This followed on from the children reading a funny poem about aliens stealing underpants.

Feedback to pupils through teachers' marking varies in quality and in how much it informs pupils what they have to do to improve. Some is exemplary and pupils have the opportunity to evaluate their success. Generally there are too few opportunities for pupils to consider the feedback from their teachers and to respond to it. Pupils enjoy a good range of educational visits to enrich their learning and spoke very highly of the residential visit to Wales and the outdoor and team-building activities undertaken, such as canoeing and dam-building in a stream.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons and around school pupils behave well. They are courteous and polite and show high levels of co-operation when given opportunities to work collaboratively. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good. Teachers encourage pupils well and this gives them confidence in their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils were observed evaluating each other's writing which was projected on to a screen. They made positive

comments about what had been well-written and had met the lesson's success criteria and what could be improved. They did this sensibly and politely to support each other.

Pupils take an active part in managing behaviour and some older pupils belong to the 'Red Card Team' which deals with minor incidents on the playground. Pupils say that they have confidence in adults to resolve any issues that may occur and they fully understand the school's rewards and sanctions. Pupils understand that there are different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the Internet. Pupils are taught about 'right and wrong' and in an assembly, when asked by the local vicar, some pupils were able to talk about times when they found it difficult to tell the truth.

Attendance rates over time are a little below average, but rapidly improving as demonstrated by recent monthly records. The number of persistently absent pupils is above average, but reducing significantly. This is due to strategies led by senior leaders and regular work by the school's learning mentor with families. The recently re-instated partnership with the education welfare service is having an impact on improving attendance, but has not been in place long enough to show a full impact on the yearly attendance figures. Through the questionnaires, parents and carers show they have generally positive views about behaviour and safety in school.

Leadership and management

Outstanding and determined leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and governing body has brought about significant improvement since the last inspection. The school's leadership is highly effective in evaluating where the school needs to improve further and in rigorously implementing appropriate strategies. The use of data to check on and improve the progress pupils make is well-embedded and highly effective. This is demonstrated by the school's prompt and successful action to accelerate progress on occasions when some pupils have been identified as having made less than the expected progress.

As a result, pupils are making good progress and attainment is rising at a good pace. This demonstrates the school's capacity to improve further. Continuing professional development and staff training are of high quality and have resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching. Leaders' monitoring is rigorous and regular and the headteacher's high expectations are clear to all staff. A 'quality teaching and learning contract' is in place for all teachers and teaching assistants. This makes explicit the high expectations in this school as to the quality of teaching and learning. This is used effectively in the performance management of staff to hold individuals to account for the progress that pupils make. The governing body has an active role in monitoring the school's work and challenging questions are asked when they examine pupils' attainment and progress data each term. The curriculum is broad and balanced and good opportunities are provided which enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development such as in assemblies and through educational visits and residential trips off-site.

Procedures to safeguard pupils meet government requirements fully. Training to ensure that staff and members of the governing body are able to safeguard pupils is thorough and up to date. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and there is good partnership-working with other agencies. The governing body receives regular and detailed information about support for, and progress of, pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The school

works effectively to promote equality and tackle discrimination and is successful in ensuring that all groups make equally good progress.

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.



14 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Stockport, SK6 1BX

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we inspected your school. We were impressed with your good behaviour and excellent manners. Thank you for talking to us freely and giving your opinions in the questionnaires; you are clearly very proud of your school and feel safe and happy. Inspectors agree with your opinions.

The leadership of the school by your headteacher is outstanding in making sure that all of you make good progress. Teaching is good overall and some of it is outstanding. Standards are rising and more of you are reaching the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 2 and, in reading in particular, in Key Stage 1. Your behaviour is good and you know the difference between right and wrong. You think carefully about important issues and this was demonstrated in an assembly when some of you talked about times when it was difficult to tell the truth.

We have asked that your headteacher and senior leaders help your school to become even better by raising standards through actions to improve the quality of teaching further. In addition, although many of you attend school regularly, not everyone comes to school as much as they should. We have asked that more work is done with you and your families to make sure that your attendance is good.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by attending school every day.

Yours sincerely

Andrée Keddle
Lead Inspector

