

St Mark's Voluntary Aided Ecumenical Church of England/Methodist Primary School

St Mark's Road, Worle, Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset, BS22 7PU

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St Mark's is a closely knit community where pupils are welcomed, kept safe and treated equally.
- Children do extremely well in Reception, especially in developing their social and communication skills. Exemplary pastoral care supports pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning seamlessly as they move through the school.
- Good teaching helps pupils to learn with, and from, each other so that they acquire skills and achieve well.
- Pupils are good at speaking and listening. They spoke eloquently about feeling safe, being very well looked after and enjoying coming to school.
- The headteacher and governors strongly promote the pupils' moral, social and cultural development and their spiritual development in a Christian context.
- All staff, including the family adviser, work tirelessly to sustain excellent relationships with parents, other schools and the local community. These links help secure pupils' above-average attendance and contribute to the school's extensive range of stimulating activities.
- Leaders, governors and staff work very well together and share a determination to bring further improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- At times, teachers do not match activities closely enough to pupils' different abilities or expect enough work from them.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively in whole class situations.
- New ways of checking and recording pupils' progress as they move through the school have not been in place long enough to have had an impact on pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 25 lessons and the headteacher or deputy headteacher accompanied inspectors during several of these observations.
- The inspectors observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and also attended an assembly and a family event on social and emotional aspects of learning.
- Meetings were held with members of the school council and inspectors talked to many other pupils during lessons and breaktimes. The inspectors met with governors and the lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders, and took account of the 34 responses to staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors also took account of 100 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and a letter from a parent. They spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, school improvement plans, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Pike

Additional Inspector

David Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This primary school is above average in size.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is below average. Currently no children looked after by the local authority attend the school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress from good to outstanding by:
 - quickening the pace of pupils' learning and raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of the amount of work they should complete during group activities
 - making sure that work is closely matched to pupils' different abilities
 - making more effective use of teaching assistants when teachers are working with the whole class.
- Ensure that the new methods introduced to gather information and check pupils' progress through the school are used effectively to accelerate their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make an excellent start in the Reception class, having enrolled with generally expected levels of skill and ability. The focus on developing children's confidence in learning, both personally and academically, ensures that they make rapid gains in their social and emotional development.
- The successful start children make in Reception is effectively built upon and pupils continue to learn with confidence through the rest of their time in the school. This is evident in the published data on pupils' attainment, which has been consistently above average at the end of Year 6 since the previous inspection, and in their above-average skills in English and mathematics now seen across the school.
- The sustained good teaching of reading, which increasingly emphasises the learning of the sounds and names of letters, and which includes additional support out of lessons, leads to pupils becoming capable and fluent readers.
- An increased focus on developing pupils' self-evaluation skills through 'target setting and getting', is redressing some previous slow progress in Key Stage 2. Observations of lessons, scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils show pupils now making good progress through the school and achieving good standards by the time they leave.
- Across the school, pupils are confident in using computers and are articulate speakers. They make perceptive contributions in lessons. For example, during the visit of a 'mathematics magician', older pupils responded capably to questions about acute, obtuse and reflex angles.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do as well as their peers. They are fully integrated in lessons and also receive well-considered support from teaching assistants out of class, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity that enables all pupils to progress well.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress. Additional staffing to support these pupils with intervention activities, especially in basic literacy and numeracy, has led to an improvement in their achievement and is closing the gap with other pupils. For example, seven of the eight pupils receiving such support attained nationally expected levels in both English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012.

The quality of teaching is good

- All teachers and teaching assistants promote pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. They are highly accomplished in developing pupils' collaborative learning skills and supporting pupils with very complex needs. Adults are also adept at stimulating pupils' reading by reading stories with expression and modelling the use of descriptive vocabulary when discussing an author's intentions or the characters in a story.
- In the Reception classes, children's learning is characterised by stimulating, practical activities both indoors and outside. For example, in one lesson the children became engrossed listening to the story *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, during which the teacher advanced their knowledge of letter sounds. Following this, the children made further gains in learning either by making shoes for the elves or undertaking role-play activities linked to the story.
- By ensuring that pupils have their own list of personal targets and by making close links with specific learning objectives, teachers mostly have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is notably the case during the weekly 'target setting and getting' literacy and mathematics lessons, where, because learning activities are matched closely to pupils' abilities, teachers ensure that all pupils, including the most able, achieve well.
- When pupils are working in small groups, however, sometimes the work set is either not matched closely enough to their ability or the teacher's expectations of what should be completed during a specific period of time are not high enough.

- Teachers question pupils effectively. This was evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where the teacher used questions to draw out the pupils' explanations and extend their understanding of algebraic expressions.
- Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to individual pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium. Sometimes, however, teaching assistants do not contribute quite as effectively to whole-class sessions.
- Pupils' work in books is well marked and gives pupils good information about how to improve.
- Inspectors' observations of lessons, most of which were good or outstanding, supported the school's own evaluation of the quality teaching over time. For example, during English in Years 5 and 6, the teacher's lively explanations, focused questioning and encouraging use of the pupils' ideas sustained a suitable pace and successfully extended pupils' expressive and imaginative writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave outstandingly well throughout the school. They are considerate of each other, with older pupils readily helping younger children at lunchtimes. Pupils are welcoming and very polite to visitors.
- Pupils are proud of their school, valuing and promoting excellent relationships in all parts of this supportive community. For example, inspectors observed a school assembly where, at the beginning, pupils diligently and movingly sang and signed the school hymn.
- Behaviour is similarly outstanding in lessons. Adults provide exemplary role models, not least by the way they value pupils' ideas and use them to develop learning. Pupils' very positive attitudes are encouraged by a well-considered range of rewards and responsibilities and by consistently applied rules and expectations that are understood by all.
- In all classes, the pupils' full participation and their willingness to cooperate with each other to improve their work greatly enhance their learning. In Year 1, for example, a pupil was heard responding to a friend's offer of assistance: 'I know you're trying to be helpful, but I want to choose my own.'
- Pupils, parents, staff and governors all agree that pupils' behaviour and the absence of bullying are significant strengths. In particular, the work of the family adviser and the close individual support given to pupils with very complex needs are much praised by parents. One parent expressed the views of others when saying, 'The school gave my child fantastic support when she needed it the most.'
- The school's very supportive links with parents and the pupils' great enjoyment of school contribute to pupils' consistently above-average attendance.
- Pupils said that they feel very safe at school. They clearly demonstrated their understanding of how to keep safe when talking about different forms of bullying and risks out of school. They also know about e-safety and how they protect themselves when using computers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's well-respected leadership, the staff's unwavering support and the exemplary day-to-day care of pupils fully safeguard pupils' welfare. Periods of moving reflection during assemblies and close links with a variety of church communities help to promote equal opportunity, eliminate discrimination and enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- High levels of staff morale, teamwork and accurate self-evaluation have helped to secure good teaching and improve the quality of pupils' learning. Leaders and managers at all levels are united behind the drive for high standards and the school has a secure capacity to improve further.

- Senior leaders manage the school's finances efficiently. This includes careful consideration of teachers' pay and performance and making full use of training opportunities for all staff.
- New methods of measuring pupils' progress over time have been recently introduced, but these are not yet having a discernible impact.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those receiving pupil premium support have their needs identified at an early stage so that they too can learn well from all the school has to offer.
- There are still some inconsistencies in teaching, which the school is working hard to address. Teachers can now give clearer advice about what learners need to do to improve. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are making better than expected progress, particularly in literacy.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to learn across a range of subjects. Stimulating activities include working with parents, making fruit salads and promoting healthy living. These activities encourage pupils' self-confidence, exemplary attitudes to learning and good links with parents.
- The local authority provides appropriate 'light-touch' support, recently with guidance on how to promote and accurately measure pupils' progress across the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors strongly promote the Christian atmosphere of the school and close relationships with parents. The governing body reflects the local community and contains a breadth of expertise. Governors are industrious in availing themselves of a wide range of training courses, including financial management and the safe recruitment of staff, in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. For example, governors ensure that considerations of staff pay and promotion are informed by the quality of pupils' performance.
 - Governors keep themselves well informed about the quality of teaching and learning through organised 'learning walk' visits to classrooms and through subject and other responsibilities such as health and safety. Governors are also informed about the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, through regular summaries from the headteacher. Governors understand that data on St Mark's pupils' attainment show the school comparing well with other schools and they are increasingly well placed to check pupils' achievement. Their focused questions and the headteacher's detailed responses are fully recorded in minutes of governors' meetings and show governors' diligence in holding the school's leaders to account. For example, governors ensure that the pupil premium supports pupils' welfare through a wide range of out of class activities and their progress through the additional help given to them in numeracy and literacy.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109273
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	412366

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	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Irwin
Headteacher	Helen Bath
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 May 2010
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