

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Sussex Way, London, N19 4JF

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The rate at which pupils make progress is too variable over time. Although improving, many pupils could make better progress than at present.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve particularly for the most able. Sometimes the pace of lessons is too slow.
- Teachers in the higher years do not always make clear to pupils the level they are reaching.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher, together with governors, has made significant improvements in the last 18 months that have raised pupils' achievement and enhanced the quality of teaching from low starting points.
- Pupils joining in the Reception class get off to a good start and enjoy a stimulating outside environment.
- Gaps between the progress of those who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who are not are now much smaller.
- Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons of which three were joint observations with the executive headteacher or head of school.
- Inspectors heard two groups of pupils read and checked the school's assessments of pupils' progress in reading. They looked at the school's own tracking system showing pupils' progress in English and mathematics. They looked at pupils' books, documents relating to school improvement, child protection and teaching.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and a representative from the local authority. A meeting was also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and an advisor.
- Inspectors reviewed the 30 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They spoke to parents and carers who were collecting at the end of the school day and they also took account of the school's recent parent survey. In addition, a parent was contacted by phone.
- Staff completed a voluntary staff questionnaire and their views were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philip Mann

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mark's Church of England school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a range of different ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils whose parents are members of the armed forces and those looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is in partnership with Kentish Town Church of England Primary School. The headteacher of Kentish Town 16 months ago also became the executive headteacher of St Mark's. He works four days a week at St Mark's.
- There is a breakfast club which is run by the governing body.
- There is an after-school club, which is subject to a separate inspection.
- There has been a significant proportion of staff turnover in recent months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations about what higher attaining pupils can achieve and ensuring that work is suitably challenging for them
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons so that all pupils can achieve their full potential
 - ensuring that pupils are fully informed about their potential levels in national tests particularly in Year 6.
- Raise standards and accelerate progress across the school by:
 - ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress in all classes
 - providing regular and specific opportunities for pupils to reinforce and practise their writing skills in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2012 pupils' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was below average and had been for several years and at the end of Year 6 it was also below average. The progress of pupils in 2012 was not fast enough. There was also a large gap in attainment in both English and mathematics between those who were eligible for the pupil premium and those who were not.

- In relation to its performance nationally, the school was in the bottom 20% of all schools for Key Stage 1 and the lowest 40% of all schools for Key Stage 2.
- Predictions for 2013 are much better, due to the effective leadership of the executive headteacher. Assessment data and other inspection evidence show pupils on track to reach levels of attainment much closer to national averages at the end of both key stages.
- Although the rate of pupils' progress has improved from 2012, progress still requires improvement. The rates of progress in different year groups are not as fast as they should be, an exception being in Year 2 where progress is good. Progress varies between year groups because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching; in some cases staff turnover is an additional contributory factor. This is being addressed through improved leadership and management.
- Achievement in reading is improving. The school has invested heavily in reading support assistants who provide skilful phonics (the sounds that letters make) help to small groups who find reading difficult. The result of this is that these pupils have made faster progress than their peers. Older pupils enjoy being part of the reading group where they listen to the reading of younger pupils. Predictions for 2013 are much improved from the 2012 results.
- In writing, there have also been improvements from 2012. The school has invested in outside consultants and by implementing many of the suggestions, have improved progress. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write extensively in subjects other than English and this limits their progress in developing their writing skills.
- In numeracy, achievement is also improving and predictions for 2013 show that over half the pupils should attain the higher levels.
- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills typically below that expected for their age, particularly in communication and personal development. They make good progress and enjoy a wide range of exciting activities. A recent project enabled children to enjoy finding the various countries that they had come from when looking at the world from the moon. Opportunities such as these enhance children's social and cultural development. By the time pupils enter Year 1 they are achieving levels just below national expectations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from targeted support and subsequently make progress similar to their peers. However, these groups make better progress in some year groups than others, in line with their peers.
- The school now makes effective use of the extra money provided by the pupil premium funding to enhance learning opportunities for eligible pupils. As a result the gaps that existed last year between the attainment in English and mathematics of those eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are not are now negligible. Indeed there are several examples where pupils who have the additional funding do better than those who do not.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in both key stages has been too variable over time; as a result too few pupils have made consistently good progress in both English and mathematics. The quality of teaching has now improved although some inconsistencies remain.
- During the inspection some teaching observed did not support good progress. Lessons that required improvements were characterised by a lack of pace, where teachers gave pupils too much time to complete activities. This resulted in some pupils not achieving their full potential. When the pace of learning slackened this not only affected progress but also pupils' motivation

and behaviour.

- There is some additional provision for pupils who have the potential to attain more highly, such as the mathematics group that is run by the executive headteacher. However, there are still some occasions in class where more-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently because planning does not take full account of the needs of higher attainers; on occasion they have to wait for their peers to complete tasks.
- Although pupils were able to talk about their targets to improve in both English and mathematics during the inspection, some pupils in Year 6 were unsure about their potential levels in the forthcoming tests.
- The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is a good balance of adult-directed activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Pupils make good use of the expansive and well-designed outside area. As a result they learn well by exploring and finding things out for themselves. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are encouraged in their learning through targeted support; for example, in a phonics session a child who was sounding out the word 'dig' was encouraged to tell the class what the word was in Polish.
- All pupils understand the marking system and teachers always show what is good about a piece of work and areas on which the pupils can improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils get on well with one another and with staff. They are polite to visitors and are very welcoming. The school is a harmonious community in which pupils' contributions are highly valued.
- Parents and carers who completed the school's own questionnaire and those who completed the online Parent View are sure that the school provides a safe environment and that their children enjoy school and behave well.
- Staff are good role models and sensitive support assistants ensure that those who are more vulnerable feel well supported.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with promptly by the school. They recognise the dangers of using the internet and know how to avoid these problems.
- Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils behave well in the well-organised breakfast club and queue sensibly in the dining hall for their lunch. Monitors make sure that the stairs are used carefully.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, including that which is based on prejudice or homophobia. Pupils state that any bullying is dealt with quickly by staff.
- Attendance is broadly average and there are clear strategies to improve it further, including the work of the home–school link worker.
- Pupils are encouraged to work well together and this was clearly demonstrated in a Year 5 assembly on space where pupils spoke to a large audience of pupils and parents and carers.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, visits to places of interest and taking part in musical and sporting events in areas away from the school broaden pupils' understanding.

The leadership and management are good

- Decisive action by governors, the local authority and diocese enabled the school to begin the process of improvement well over a year ago and now the rate of improvement is considerable.

This is due largely to the partnership with an executive headteacher who has provided clear direction for the school and this message is clearly conveyed through all levels of leadership.

- The legacy of previous years of underachievement has been arrested due to careful monitoring of teaching and learning and careful tracking of every pupil's attainment and rate of progress. These strategies have been effective in improving the quality of teaching overall and in raising achievement.
- Subject leaders ensure that initiatives suggested by the senior management are put into action quickly and consistently across the school. An example of this is the staff training on marking which was provided by the local authority; as a result, marking is now effective and consistent in all classes.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and based on a comprehensive monitoring of teaching and learning. All actions are designed to have a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement.
- Performance management is rigorous; it is effective because it links the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils and good achievement. It is well used to identify professional development needs and to set targets for improvements. The result of this is that weaker performance is being tackled quickly. The link between teachers' performance and their progression along the pay scale is clear.
- The local authority and the London Diocesan Board for Schools have provided a high level of support, included frequent teaching and learning reviews of each teacher as well as specific subjects such as English and mathematics.
- The curriculum provides a generally good range of subjects and activities and is well supported by extra-curricular activities.
- There is zero tolerance of any form of discrimination. The school promotes equal opportunities well and this fosters good relationships.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are fully in place, regularly reviewed and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have fully taken on the need to improve the school and have implemented effective strategies towards that end. The governing body has strengthened its own expertise and several members have experience in education; the impact of this is that the school is moving forward quickly. Governors have a good awareness of the data on school performance and how the school compares with other primaries nationally. They are regular visitors to the school and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They are fully involved in the process of rewarding good teachers and tackling any underperformance. They ensure clarity of the performance management processes and ensure that targets are linked to salary. Governors keep a close check on the school's budget and make sure that the pupil premium funding is used to good effect to provide one-to-one and small-group support.

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	100444
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	412301

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Kinnear
Headteacher	Calvin Henry
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 November 2009
Telephone number	020 7272 5967
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