

St Mark's C of E Primary School

Ramslye Rd, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 8LN

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher who have brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement since the last inspection. They have created a cohesive and effective staff team that is dedicated to ensuring this improvement continues.
- Better consistency in pupils' progress from Year 3 to Year 6 means attainment has risen steadily over time. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average.
- Gaps are closing for disadvantaged pupils because extra funding is used efficiently.
- Teachers plan lessons that are engaging and carefully matched to pupils' abilities. This is a key factor in pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Excellent teaching in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 means a legacy of underachievement is being reversed.
- The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and offers high levels of challenge to the senior leaders while supporting them effectively when making difficult decisions.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and attendance has improved. Parents and carers are supportive and feel the school keeps their children safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not give pupils enough time on a regular basis to respond fully to comments following the marking of work in books and so miss the chance to accelerate their learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn or apply their skills using real-life situations, especially in mathematics. This hinders their levels of achievement.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop independent ways of recording their work are too limited in some lessons, especially in mathematics, and this slows progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all teachers, visiting 11 lessons. Four of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors examined a selection of books from all classes and scrutinised the assessment information for current learners. They also heard pupils read.
- A wide range of documents was seen including the school development plans, minutes of governing body meetings, self-evaluation information, reports of external visits, records of any behaviour incidents and information with regard to safeguarding and safety.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, a group of pupils, and members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone call was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 42 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, a written communication and spoke informally with several parents and carers at the beginning of the day. They also considered responses from 12 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Penny Spencer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bryan Meyer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding for children looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals or whose parents or carers serve in the armed forces) is slightly higher than average. There are no children from service families at the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is in line with all other schools. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club which was part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a number of changes of staff at all levels, including a new headteacher, since the last inspection.
- The school is expanding to two forms of entry from September 2013 and is being partially rebuilt and extended.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so all pupils make even better progress, by making sure:
 - teachers plan lessons that give pupils more opportunities to investigate real-life situations and develop more independent ways of recording their answers, especially in mathematics
 - pupils, in all classes, have more regular and sustained periods of time to respond to teachers' marking and feedback in their books, to match the quality seen in Year 6.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school into the Reception class with a very broad range of skills and knowledge in all areas of learning. They make good progress because the quality of teaching is consistently good and the environment is exciting and well resourced. Children were observed making good progress in a mathematics session on subtraction because the practical, fun activities gave them plenty of opportunity to practise through their play.
- Progress in Years 1 and 2 has been slow in the past leading to attainment at the end of Year 2 that is below average. Progress of pupils currently in these classes has increased rapidly as a result of better teaching and there is strong evidence that this underachievement will be reversed in the end of year assessments for 2013.
- Progress from Years 2 to 6 accelerates and attainment has risen steadily. Progress for all groups of pupils was above that for similar groups of pupils nationally with many pupils making much better progress than expected.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with significant disabilities, make good progress from their starting points because their needs are carefully considered and teaching is adapted appropriately.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and attain highly because support is of high quality and carefully tailored for each pupil.
- Gaps are closing rapidly for pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium because funds are now more carefully allocated. In 2012, although their progress was good, attainment in both English and mathematics was below that of their classmates and other pupils nationally, as measured by the average points scores. Current assessment information shows standards for these pupils in 2013 will be higher and gaps will be smaller.
- Reading, including the linking of letters to the sounds they make, is taught well. Pupils who read to inspectors had a good understanding of how to sound out unfamiliar words. Both younger and older readers have a love of reading for pleasure and could talk about their favourite books enthusiastically.
- Progress in some classes is slower for some pupils, especially in mathematics, because recording is often done on a worksheet that does not allow them to develop independent methods of showing their skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of effective checks by the senior leadership team the quality of teaching has improved dramatically and is now consistently good. Teachers have very high expectations and are committed to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- The learning environment in classrooms is vibrant and teachers use every opportunity to display pupils' work as a model for other pupils and to reflect the learning process.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and make sure they fully understand the task and how to check their work. Year 2 pupils were observed developing their knowledge of how to use phonics to help them improve their spelling because the teacher repeatedly checked their understanding throughout the lesson.
- Teaching assistants are very good at supporting disabled pupils and those with additional needs. They are well trained and as a result these pupils make good progress.
- Teachers mark books regularly and there is a consistent approach that develops as pupils move through the school. While there is evidence that pupils, especially in the upper year groups, have opportunities to respond to this marking, it is not often for a sustained period or regular enough in all classes for it to be as effective as it might be.
- Teachers plan lessons that are matched carefully to pupils' abilities. However not enough use is

made of real-life situations, especially in mathematics, for pupils to fully understand the relevance of some of the things they have to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour has improved steadily because behaviour management strategies are now consistently applied by all staff. As a result there are few disruptions in lessons.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because despite the best efforts of staff, a few pupils with challenging behaviour find it hard to follow the rules consistently and do not always work as hard as they might.
- Most parents and carers are supportive and believe the school keeps their children safe. Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors recognised that while some pupils had challenging behaviour the school dealt with matters extremely well. This was substantiated by examination of the well-documented behaviour records.
- There is a strong sense of respect and fairness for all members of the school community that has created a calm but purposeful learning environment and strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils were adamant that bullying was extremely rare and they trust staff to follow up any incidents. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe both in school and when out and about in the local area. Internet safety is taught well and pupils were aware of the risks when using the internet or social media.
- Attendance is broadly average and has improved since the last inspection. Leaders follow up rigorously any pupils who are seen to be falling behind in their attendance, using their family liaison officer and outside agencies to provide support for any families who may be experiencing difficulties.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club get off to a good start in a safe environment. Pupils enjoy coming and there are lots of activities for children to do once they have finished their breakfast.

The leadership and management are good

- The unwavering drive and determination of the headteacher and deputy headteacher have helped develop a good staff team that is strongly focused on improving teaching and raising achievement. As a result the proportion of consistently good teaching has increased significantly over a short time and standards are rising.
- Rigorous checks on the quality of teaching, using a wide variety of evidence to ensure judgements are secure, coupled with carefully matched support and training opportunities, have ensured teachers have every opportunity to improve their practice.
- Subject leaders are fully involved in the checks and evaluation of teaching and learning. They report regularly to the governing body to ensure they are kept fully informed of progress and improvements. They act as role models for other teachers in developing good practice and are lead teachers within the local authority.
- However, some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders have not yet had sufficient time to secure a large proportion of outstanding teaching and so accelerate pupils' progress.
- The cycle of checking and review is closely linked to pupils' outcomes. Targets are now set related to the achievement of groups who may be falling behind and who need to make accelerated progress to catch up.
- Pupil premium funding is spent carefully on a range of additional resources, including the provision of extra support by teaching assistants, specific learning programmes and funding for pupils to be able to participate in extra-curricular activities. These contribute to the equality of opportunity for all pupils that is firmly embedded in the school's ethos. Rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness by the deputy headteacher ensures they provide good value for money.

- Following the previous inspection the local authority was giving considerable support to the school to ensure it progressed quickly; it now offers an increasingly light touch. The school has been selected by the local authority to be expanded and to have significant rebuilding on the strength of its improvements.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced with many opportunities for pupils to participate in music and sport. Opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of subjects are strong and the quality of this work is high. Opportunities to use mathematical skills in the same way are not so well developed because not enough use is made of real-life experiences or investigative approaches to learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance because they are a visible presence in the life of the school. They offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior leaders. Training to ensure they understand what assessment data are telling them and how the school compares nationally has given them greater confidence to challenge any underperformance. Some recent appointments have strengthened the range of skills and expertise they bring to the role. Reporting procedures are strong and the flow of information from the school is seen by the governors to be extremely reliable and helpful in helping them perform their duties to a very high standard. Financial resources are well managed and progression of teachers up the salary scale is closely linked to pupils' performance. Governors are clear about how the pupil premium is being spent and know that this is helping raise standards for this group. They have been rigorous in ensuring all safeguarding procedures fully meet statutory requirements.

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	118613
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	405794

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Stevenson
Headteacher	Robin Dungate
Date of previous school inspection	31 January – 1 February 2011
Telephone number	01892 525402
Fax number	01892 532409
Email address	headteacher@st-marks.kent.sch.uk

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