

# St Marks CofE Primary School

Manor Road, Brighton, BN2 5EA

**Inspection dates** 12–13 June 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Over time, too few pupils have made good progress in English and mathematics.
- Recently appointed leaders have put effective systems in place to accelerate pupils' progress and improve teaching, but there has been too little time to help all pupils catch up.
- Teaching assistants are not equally expert at supporting pupils' progress in lessons.
- Sometimes, the pace of learning is too leisurely; teachers do not check pupils' progress and move pupils on to harder work when they are ready. Questioning is not always used well, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to develop pupils' thinking, speaking and listening skills.
- While pupils' behaviour has been greatly improved, a number of pupils lack confidence and self-motivation. In some lessons, opportunities for pupils to develop independence and perseverance are limited.

### The school has the following strengths

- Staff morale is high. There is a shared vision of how to improve the school and teachers understand that they are accountable for pupils' progress.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are giving strong direction to the work of the school.
- Relationships are warm and trusting. Everyone is included and valued as an individual. Pupils feel safe and very well looked after in school.
- Marking is usually of good quality and pupils know what they must do to improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in 17 lessons and pupils' work was examined, especially in English and mathematics. Some observations were joint visits with senior leaders. In addition, a whole-school assembly was observed.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, two members of the school's governing body and a representative of the local authority. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for pupils to read aloud. Informal discussions with pupils took place at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 18 staff questionnaires. Parents' involvement in school life was discussed with senior leaders. At the beginning of one day, informal conversations were held with parents in the school playground.
- A range of documentation was looked at, including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- In recent years, the turnover of staff has been high. Also, a high number of vacancies seriously diminished the capacity of the governing body. The situation is now far more stable.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator have all been appointed in the last eighteen months.
- The large majority of pupils are White British but there is an increasing number from minority ethnic groups. Of these, while still below average, a growing number speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children with a parent or carer serving in the armed forces and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than usual times is above average.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their attitudes to learning through strengthening teaching so that every lesson is at least good and more lessons are outstanding by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in learning and develop independence through group work, problem solving and finding things out for themselves
  - speeding up the pace of learning so that pupils achieve more in lessons
  - sharing best practice in questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and improve their thinking, speaking and listening skills
  - teachers checking the progress that pupils make in lessons closely and moving them on to harder work in a timely way
  - ensuring teaching assistants are equally expert in supporting pupils' progress in lessons, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by embedding the new systems for accelerating pupils' progress and checking the quality of teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. Social and communication skills are particularly underdeveloped. The children settle quickly and are well cared for. A growing number of children make good progress, but too many make only expected progress and their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is low at the beginning of Key Stage 1.
- Attainment overall is low and below the minimum expectations set by the government. In 2012, the Year 1 check showed that pupils' understanding of letters and sounds was below average. Pupils' current work and the school's reliable data show that attainment, including in reading, is rising and the gap with national averages is beginning to close. However, while reducing, there is still variation in pupils' progress.
- The school is now strongly focused on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers' deepened subject knowledge in mathematics and new teaching resources are helping more pupils to secure higher National Curriculum levels in the subject. Expanded opportunities to write and read for a range of purposes are having a similar impact in English.
- A relatively high number of pupils joins or leaves the school at other than usual times. For some of these pupils, English is an additional language and they are at an early stage of learning it. The school now has much better systems in place to assess these pupils on entry. The progress of all pupils is tracked very closely. Where concerns are raised, effective interventions are put in place to support learning. Consequently, more pupils are making good progress, including those from ethnic minority groups, those joining at unusual times and those for whom English is an additional language.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs have not achieved as well as they should have in the past. However, analysis of their needs is now accurate and individualised teaching programmes are supporting their learning and well-being effectively, so that their progress is accelerating.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching support and enrichment for pupils who need it. Those who qualify for the funding are making the same improving, but variable, progress as their peers. There are no significant gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates in either English or mathematics.
- Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire were unanimous in agreeing that their children are making good progress at the school. Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that while more pupils are achieving well, this is not yet consistent across the school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There is too much teaching that requires improvement.
- Where teaching is less effective the pace of lessons is often too slow and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learned independently.
- Questioning does not always extend pupils' thinking or develop their speaking and listening skills. In addition, teachers sometimes take too many responses from pupils with their hands up rather than selecting individuals to probe or stretch their understanding.
- Sometimes, when teachers do not check pupils' progress closely enough in lessons, pupils do not move on to harder work when they are ready.
- Occasionally, too much time is wasted when pupils change activities and there is a lack of urgency and energy in making the most of learning time.
- In some lessons, teaching assistants demonstrate an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and support their progress very well. However, this expertise is not shared by all teaching assistants. In particular, the quality of interactions between staff

and children in the Nursery and Reception classes is inconsistent and hindering pupils' progress.

- Where teaching is good or better, well-designed, good quality resources support learning that proceeds at a lively pace. The tasks set are imaginative, varied and appropriately demanding.
- Expectations for work and behaviour are high and are met. Teachers question expertly to probe and accelerate understanding. They also encourage pupils to develop their responses and persevere with tasks.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and apply what they have learned without direct help from the teacher. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils assumed the role of a character in the ghost stories they were writing. They worked in pairs. One pupil was 'in role' and the other asked the character questions and then they swapped. Pupils not only enjoyed the task but were able to go on and develop the characters in their stories very successfully.
- Marking generally ensures pupils reflect on the quality of their work. A clear system is in place that is used well by teachers to identify pupils' next steps in learning. When asked by inspectors, most older pupils had a grasp of what they needed to do to improve their subject skills.
- All the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire felt their children were taught well. While teaching is not yet good, these views do support the evidence that the decline in teaching, resulting from a high turnover of staff, has been halted and it is now improving.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- Not all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and there is some low-level disruption in lessons. This is usually managed well by staff who are implementing the strengthened behaviour management system consistently. The impact of the new system is evident in the reduction of incidents of misbehaviour in the school's well-kept records.
- Pupils can be very passive and reticent when it comes to taking the lead in learning activities, but they do enjoy school life. Persistent absence has decreased and, although below average, attendance is showing signs of improvement.
- While some parents express concerns about pupils' behaviour, the large majority, and nearly all staff, agree that pupils are behaving much better. Respect for others is at the heart of the school's values and pupils' improving behaviour. Caring and considerate relationships are evident throughout the school and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Some pupils with special educational needs have emotional and behavioural difficulties. In partnership with parents and other agencies, the school provides good support to these pupils.
- The school has been creative in using its resources well to meet the very diverse needs of its pupils. The learning mentors and family liaison officer make an important contribution to the school's harmonious atmosphere.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and they learn how to stay safe in their community and when using the internet. They know and understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and are confident that any concerns that they report are managed quickly and effectively by staff.
- Pupils explore their talents and interests through the widening range of extra activities, outings, cultural events and residential trips. These experiences are helping them to develop into thoughtful and compassionate individuals who appreciate that people are different.

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator have been appointed in the last eighteen months. The senior team is still establishing itself, but it is working cohesively and has moved swiftly to strengthen management systems throughout the school, particularly those for monitoring the quality of teaching and reviewing pupils' progress.

However, there has not been sufficient time to overcome the weaknesses in teaching and achievement.

- Staffing has been stabilised, although the school is yet to appoint a permanent Early Years Foundation Stage leader.
  - Management decisions for teachers' movement up the salary scale are now rigorous with pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and salary progression closely linked. Underperformance has been tackled robustly and a growing proportion of teaching is good or better.
  - Staff are clear that raising achievement is a priority and are united in their determination to bring about improvements and secure the success of every pupil. They have responded positively to sharper accountability and to opportunities for training and development. In particular, they have welcomed the chance to join the city partnership and benefit from the openings to share best practice in teaching and leadership.
  - The curriculum meets pupils' needs and fosters their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers and support staff are increasingly creative and thoughtful in personalising experiences for pupils.
  - Parents are recognising the improvements that are being made. The school is developing a partnership with parents that is open and seeks to maximise their involvement in their children's learning. Some parents took the time to write to the inspection team to say how pleased they were with the care and support that their children are receiving. One wrote, 'St Marks has good family communication and support. I would not hesitate to approach any member of staff if I had a problem.' All of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
  - The local authority has provided high-quality support to the school which has helped it to come through a very unsettled period. Senior leaders feel the relationship has been very productive. The authority rightly recognises that the school will continue to need some support. However, senior leaders' and governors' capacity to secure further improvement is developing rapidly.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body has completely recovered from a low point where there were only three members. The Chair is providing strong leadership and she is very well supported by other governors who spearhead key areas of work.
    - Governors are well organised and well informed. They both challenge and support senior leaders robustly and have a good understanding of the quality of teaching across the school.
    - Governors manage staff performance astutely and this is helping to increase the momentum of improvement.
    - They are reflective and improve their skills through regular training. There has been an effective focus on analysing the school's performance data and comparing it with other schools nationally.
    - Good decisions have been made over the spending of the pupil premium, especially through the development of extra support for vulnerable pupils. Governors check the impact on pupils' progress carefully to ensure best use of this funding.
    - The governing body makes sure that all statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114545
<b>Local authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	412644

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Meek
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Fendley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 March 2010
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