

St Mark's CE Primary School

Aylesbury Road, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0QR

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- From the Reception classes onwards, pupils enjoy learning, make good progress and achieve well. By Year 6, standards are well above average.
- From an early stage, pupils are taught to understand how to link sounds and letters to enable them to read fluently and with expression.
- Pupils are very well cared for and supported. They, and their parents, say that they are happy in school and feel safe.
- Pupils work and play well together and are friendly and polite to adults. Their attendance is good and they behave well in lessons and around school.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting work that motivates pupils to want to learn.
- Good partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants support pupils well. Any pupils at risk of falling behind are helped to catch up quickly.
- The headteacher's dynamic leadership is resulting in rapid improvement. Her vision for the school is shared and strongly supported by staff and the governing body.
- Many opportunities to take part in the arts and sport promote pupils' moral, social and cultural development well. The strong links with the local church contribute well to their spiritual development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- The role of middle leaders in the school is underdeveloped.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding and this means that pupils do not always receive the challenge and advice they need to help them make as much progress as they could.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 23 lessons, four of which were joint observations with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors listened to pupils reading and reviewed the work in their books.
- Discussions were held with pupils about their experience at the school and their views on how well they are doing.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders.
- The inspection team took account of 122 submissions to the online Parent View, two emails and a letter from parents, as well as conversations with parents before school. They also considered the views of 42 staff who completed the questionnaire.
- The inspection team evaluated documentation, including information on the pupils' current attainment and progress, curriculum and development plans, as well as procedures and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lucy Nutt

Additional Inspector

Roger Parry

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Just over half the pupils come from families of White British heritage. The other pupils come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs at school action is below average, but the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school does not send any pupils to be educated off site in other institutions or alternative placements.
- The school has had a number of changes to staffing since the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2012 following a period when the school had an acting headteacher. The current senior leadership team was formed in September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - making sure that teachers adapt their joint planning more specifically to the needs of pupils and raise the level of challenge for individuals and groups in their classes
 - improving marking so as to give consistent and clear guidance to pupils about how they can improve their written work and also the quality of its presentation.
- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they are able to make an effective contribution to raising standards and improving the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are broadly at the level expected for their age in personal, social and emotional development, although somewhat below expectations in speaking and listening, reading and writing. They make good progress, so that by the time they move into Year 1 their achievement is in line with expectations.
- In recent years, in Key Stages 1 and 2, achievement had declined, but the results of national tests in 2013 and the school's own records for current pupils show that this decline has been reversed. Pupils are once again making securely good progress, with little difference between year groups. By Year 6, attainment is well above average.
- The teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters) gives pupils a very secure foundation for developing reading skills and they really enjoy reading. In 2013, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved over the previous year and was well above the national figure.
- Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is better than their progress in writing. Fewer pupils achieve the higher Level 5 in writing. Raising standards in writing is currently a major area of focus. Teachers are giving pupils more opportunities to write for a variety of purposes in different subjects. Staff have also recognised that more work is needed to ensure that pupils learn to write neatly and legibly.
- Pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium make good progress and achieve at a broadly similar level to their peer group, as do those pupils who speak English as an additional language. This is because their needs are carefully assessed and they are given effective help where it is needed. In 2013 these pupils did as well as other pupils in reading and better than other pupils in mathematics. They were slightly below the National Curriculum level achieved by their peer group in writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and disabled pupils make good progress due to consistent challenge and support being provided. They are making as good progress as their peers in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, activities engage pupils' interest and help pupils to make rapid progress. Teachers manage behaviour highly effectively to create a pleasant working atmosphere where pupils know what is expected of them, respond well and genuinely try to do their best.
- Teaching in all year groups promotes good progress and there is some outstanding teaching which is helping pupils to make faster progress. Teachers are increasingly using work in other subjects well to support progress in English and mathematics.
- Teachers work very closely with support staff to ensure that both work in class and extra support groups help all pupils to make similarly good progress. The impact of this is seen in the good progress of pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium and of pupils with special educational needs and/or English as an additional language.
- In the Reception classes, staff plan well together to provide a variety of activities which help to develop children's self confidence and their personal and social skills, as well as specific opportunities to develop reading, writing and mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Staff record children's progress carefully and systematically to make sure that activities build on what children already know and can do. For example, in lively phonics sessions, children were using their knowledge of letters and sounds to read words and then to put them into simple sentences. The most able pupils were able to write these sentences using correct punctuation.
- Joint planning means that teachers can share expertise and ensures that pupils in parallel classes have similar experiences. In a few lessons, though, the planning had not been adapted

sufficiently to the needs of the different classes to raise the level of challenge and give pupils opportunities to make outstanding progress.

- The school's current focus on writing shows in the displays of work around the school, for example in some interesting and lively work on the Tudors. However, the quality and quantity of written work are not consistently high and the standard of presentation is too variable.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and use the marking to encourage pupils to try to achieve more. The marking is not always consistent enough in giving pupils guidance on how to improve their work from good to outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school. They attend regularly and are keen to take part in everything offered, including a good range of sports, art, music, drama and visits to places of interest.
- They have good attitudes to learning. They cooperate willingly with each other in discussions and participate enthusiastically in activities in lessons.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around school and in the playground. Pupils think that behaviour is good and that it is improving. Parents also believe that behaviour is good and commented that this is because pupils are well supported.
- Relationships are good and pupils know that if they have any problems there are people they can turn to for help. Pupils know how to stay safe. They were able to explain how they are helped to understand and deal with different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They do not regard bullying as a problem.
- Pupils are actively involved in school life and are consulted about issues that particularly affect them. They have many opportunities to take responsibilities, including as school councillors. They take their duties very seriously and this contributes well to their personal development.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because pupils are still too dependent on responding to adults' expectations and instructions rather than taking full responsibility for their own behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- Prior to the appointment of the current headteacher, the school went through a period of staffing instability during which standards started to decline rapidly. Since taking up post in September 2012, the headteacher has provided the school with outstanding leadership. She has focused relentlessly on key elements of teaching and learning to reverse the decline. She is strongly supported by the leadership team and the governing body. Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the direction the school is taking.
- The leadership team has worked hard to improve pupils' attainment and progress by developing consistently good and better teaching. Staff know that they are accountable for pupils' progress and performance targets for staff are linked directly to achievement. They also know that they will be supported and helped to improve their skills through systematic and effective professional development.
- The leadership team has made it a priority to develop an effective middle leadership team which is capable of contributing to school improvement. This work is at an early stage and the impact is not yet fully evident in most areas, though a very good start has been made in relation to sports leadership. The way in which specialist coaches are being used is proving highly effective in promoting pupils' participation in sport.
- Rigorous systems are in place to check pupils' progress, identify any actual or potential underachievement so that effective interventions can be put into place to help all pupils achieve well. The pupil premium funding is being used effectively to provide additional support and to make sure that pupils make as much progress as other pupils and are able to join in all school activities.

- The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. It provides a suitably broad range of learning. Work in subjects such as history, geography and science is being used increasingly well to develop key skills in reading, writing and mathematics. It also provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy many clubs that build their confidence and promote their social development. Visits and visitors, as well as the strong links with the local Anglican church, further help to enrich pupils' experience.
- Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate what it offers their children. Most think that their children are well taught and are generally pleased with their children's progress. Most would recommend the school to others.
- The local authority provided appropriate support for the school during the period of staffing difficulties.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are strongly supportive of the school and are keen to see it continue to improve. They are increasingly focused on understanding the reasons for its strengths and weaknesses. They have a good grasp of data relating to attainment and progress with the result that they are now better able to monitor progress effectively and ask challenging questions, for example about the progress of different groups of pupils. They have been prepared to support the headteacher in making difficult decisions about teaching and in tackling underperformance. They know more about how the performance management system works than previously. They hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make and make decisions about whether or not teachers should move up the salary scale. The procedures for safeguarding pupils meet legal 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	101648
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	440949
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	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Revd Steve Varney
Headteacher	Jennifer Richards
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 May 2011
Telephone number	020 8460 0524
Fax number	020 8313 1038
Email address	admin@st-marks.bromley.sch.uk

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