

St Mark's CofE Primary School

High Street, Pensnett, Brierley Hill, DY5 4DZ

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school's leaders, including governors, have successfully improved the quality of teaching and accelerated pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have been highly successful at ensuring that all groups make good progress and achieve well at each key stage.
- Teachers are adept at identifying which pupils need extra help and leaders ensure that such pupils receive all the help they need.
- Teachers have high expectations of how well pupils will behave and how much they can achieve in lessons.
- Pupils are well prepared for life outside school because teachers ensure pupils fully understand how to deal with 'real life' problems.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work; by Year 6 their commitment to their learning is often exemplary.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They always have someone to turn to with any problems they have.
- The headteacher is tenacious in making sure that the school follows up any safeguarding concerns with the appropriate agencies.
- Children in the early years settle quickly and make good progress in both their academic work and personal development.
- Leaders manage the performance of teachers exceptionally well. Targets are demanding and promote continuous improvement.
- Leaders analyse information about pupils' achievement in great depth and use the results very well to gain a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers interrupt pupils unnecessarily when they are already working hard, which slows the pace of learning.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to improve their computing skills by using them in other subjects, which slows their progress.
- Leaders do not analyse data on attendance and behaviour well enough to help them evaluate the impact of the initiatives they have introduced.
- Governors do not meet requirements for providing information for parents on the school's website, including details of the use of pupil premium and sports funding, the curriculum and links to school performance tables.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, including four jointly observed with senior staff. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils reading and analysed the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors spoke to parents formally and informally during the inspection to gather their views and also considered the views that some parents expressed in letters.
- Inspectors observed the school's work including arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They looked at a number of documents including: the schools own information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its performance; records relating to attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Driscoll, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Adrian Nash

Additional Inspector

Anita Cliff

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the Nursery part time. They attend the Reception class full time.
- Most pupils are White British. The rest of the school population is made up of small groups from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A high proportion of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children) is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school opened a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body, in October 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring teachers:
 - interrupt those pupils who are working purposefully only when it is necessary to clarify important points in their learning
 - provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their computing skills in other subjects.
- Analyse data on pupils' attendance and behaviour in greater depth in order to evaluate more fully the impact of initiatives taken by the school.
- Ensure governors meet statutory requirements for the content of the school's website by including full details of:
 - who to contact
 - the most recent national test results and a link to the school performance tables
 - the school's curriculum
 - the impact of the pupil premium and extra sports funding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- There have been significant improvements since the school was last inspected. The quality of teaching is now much more consistent and is good at each key stage, including in the early years. Consequently, pupils now make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors all work as a close knit team. They all take part in checks on the quality of teaching, so all have a comprehensive knowledge of where the strengths and weaknesses lie.
- When areas in need of improvement are identified, leaders are quick to tackle them and provide extra training for staff where required.
- Teachers' performance has been managed exceptionally well and has brought about significant improvements in teaching. Leaders set teachers demanding targets for the progress of all pupils in each class, and these are rigorously enforced. The result is that teachers ensure all pupils have the same good opportunities to succeed and all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Leaders analyse data on pupils' progress frequently and in great depth. Any pupil who is making slower progress than others is very quickly identified and extra support is made available to help them. The school's leaders have used their available staffing very effectively in this respect. The team of well-trained teaching assistants makes good use of a wide range of well-considered strategies to help the pupils they support, and they adapt these to meet pupils' needs very effectively.
- Data on pupils' attendance and behaviour is not analysed in sufficient detail to allow leaders to determine if actions they have taken are having an impact. For example, attendance has improved significantly over the past three years, but the improvement has recently stalled. The school has taken steps, such as providing a breakfast club, but has not checked attendance data to see if it has improved since.
- Leaders have high expectations of how well pupils will behave. The atmosphere around the school is calm and teachers consistently model the highest standards of behaviour and respect for others. Pupils learn from the adults' own behaviour that discrimination of any kind is wrong. The school is quick to take action on the very rare occasions that such behaviour is exhibited by a pupil.
- The school provides a broad range of subjects that provide well for pupils' academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are taught a good deal about cultures that are different from their own as well as about people's rights and responsibilities. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain, especially in understanding the importance of democracy; for example, pupils recently won a debating competition, held at a local council house. The school is working towards accreditation from UNICEF for their work on teaching pupils about the importance of respecting other people's rights.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funds well. The large gaps in performance observed at the previous inspection have been reduced to almost nothing. Similarly, extra funds for physical education and sport have been used effectively to introduce pupils to a wider range of sports and encourage participation, both in and out of school.
- Teachers who have specific responsibility for leading aspects of the school's work to improve provision and outcomes do so very effectively. The early years leader, for example, has raised teachers' expectations of what children can achieve and standards are rising as a result.
- Safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school. The level of support has been gradually reduced over time as the school has become more effective and proved that it can move forward without a significant level of help from outside.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors play a strong part in leading the school forward. They have a good understanding of what test results and teachers' assessments are telling them, and are quick to question the headteacher where the data indicate a possible weakness or concern.
- Governors play a full part in all the activities that the senior leaders use to judge the quality of teaching. These include visiting lessons, checking the work in pupils' books and interviewing teachers. As a result, governors have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They are quick to act when a teacher's performance is not good enough and fully understand the way that the best teaching is rewarded through the systems for managing teachers' performance.
- Governors keep a close eye on the school's finances and have ensured that extra funding has been spent where it was intended and to good effect. Governors meet most statutory requirements but not those relating to the school's website; this does not contain enough information on who to contact, the most recent national test results, the school's curriculum or the impact of the pupil premium and extra sports funding. There is also no link to the government's school performance tables.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school's work to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour is very effective. By the time that pupils reach Year 6 their attitudes to learning are often exemplary.
- Pupils usually work hard in lessons and are keen to do their best. By Years 5 and 6, the overwhelming majority of pupils are able to concentrate fully on their tasks and to do so for long periods. Children in the early years quickly learn to share and to play with other children without fuss.
- Behaviour around school and at break times is good. Pupils show respect for one another and their teachers. Pupils are welcoming to others and value what teachers do for them.
- Teachers deal with the rare incidents of poor behaviour swiftly and effectively. Permanent exclusions are almost unknown at the school and very few pupils are excluded for short periods.
- Attendance has improved significantly over the last three years and is now average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The headteacher follows up any safeguarding concerns rigorously and ensures that other agencies, such as social services, are kept well informed about any issues.
- Pupils are safe in school, and rightly feel confident that staff will take any concerns they have seriously. The very rare incidents of bullying, for example, are quickly nipped in the bud.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of circumstances. They know the fire evacuation procedures in school, for example. Younger pupils have a clear understanding of the dangers of talking to strangers, and older ones are aware of the need to be careful when using the internet.

The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is consistently good across the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and set them challenging tasks that make them think hard. Many of these tasks are linked to issues pupils will encounter in everyday life and this helps prepare pupils well for adulthood. Pupils in Year 6, for example, were given the task of deciding whether the claim '50% off! We had already reduced prices by 30% and have now taken off another 20%'

could be true. Pupils threw themselves into the task and intently discussed how to tackle the problem.

- Teachers' marking is particularly effective in helping pupils learn to write with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers mark written work accurately and make sure that pupils learn from their mistakes by always carrying out corrections. Teachers consistently give pupils an extra task to think about, so they are always aiming to improve.
- Reading books are chosen to engage pupils and promote a love of reading. Children in the early years, for example, were studying monsters at the time of the inspection. They have all read 'The Gruffalo' and many are reading it again. Others have started to read books on similar topics that interest them, such as dinosaurs. Teachers carefully increase the difficulty of the text as pupils become more adept readers. Books are well matched to their abilities and pupils make good progress as a result.
- Teachers are most effective at assessing pupils' achievement. They are quick to pick up any misconceptions that pupils have and provide clear explanations that help pupils understand where they have gone wrong. The effectiveness of the training that teachers have received to improve their subject knowledge is evident in such cases, when teachers can answer questions without referring to text books or the internet.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. Most are not assigned to a single class, but instead employ their expertise wherever it is most needed. If individual pupils are struggling with reading, for example, they are removed from the lesson for a short period to receive intensive, expert support that helps them to make up any ground lost.
- The school's leaders and teachers ensure pupils learn to become less reliant on their teachers. This means that they often work hard on a task without the need for the teacher's support. However, their concentration is often broken unnecessarily, and their learning slowed, by the teacher stopping them to tell them something. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, the pupils were all totally engaged in writing when the teacher stopped them all to listen to a sentence that a pupil had produced. By the time the interruption was over, several pupils had forgotten the words that they were going to use.
- While teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to use their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to apply their computing skills in other subjects. This slows pupils' progress in computing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils now make good progress and achieve well. In the past, some classes experienced weaker teaching and made slower progress as a result. These inconsistencies have now been ironed out and the school's tracking shows pupils make consistently good progress across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age in speech and language. They make good progress and their standards on starting Year 1 and now broadly average.
- Good progress continues across Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards are rising rapidly at both key stages, from well below average in 2012 to average in 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers. The very effective use of teaching assistants ensures that they receive the right type of support exactly when it is needed.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. Teachers' assessments of pupils currently in the school show that above average proportions are expected to reach the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2. Many of the most-able pupils in Year 6 are on track to make more than the expected progress by the time they leave.

- Disadvantaged pupils make slightly better progress than others, although their standards in 2014 still lagged behind others in the school. They were around a term behind in mathematics and two terms in reading and writing. Compared to all pupils nationally, the gaps were one term in mathematics and reading; there is no longer any gap in writing.

The early years provision is good

- Children make good progress in the early years and are well prepared for when they start Year 1.
- Children with speech and language problems quickly have their needs identified. The school has appointed a specialist teacher to support this group of pupils and the good support they are given helps them to begin to overcome their communication difficulties.
- The most-able children are helped to tackle demanding tasks. 'Go on, you can do it' is a common cry from teachers, as children work out how much to charge for ice creams, write letters to people and test one another on the sounds that letters make. The proportion reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception is above average.
- Teachers plan a wide range of activities that engage children by building on their interests. One boy who had made a model of a vehicle from his favourite game was able to describe it precisely as the teacher prompted him to use new vocabulary and consider its symmetry.
- Children are taught to behave well and act safely. They take great care when moving large objects, for example, so that they don't poke other children.
- Parents are very positive about the provision, and especially the workshops that the school provides to enable them to help their children's learning at home.
- Good leadership and management are ensuring that the setting goes from strength to strength, with standards rising as children make faster progress.

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	103836
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	453697

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Price
Headteacher	Carole Smith
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2013
Telephone number	01384 818935
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Email address	info@st-marks.dudley.sch.uk

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