

# St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Redhouse Lane, Bredbury, Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 1BX

## Inspection dates

3–4 March 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Progress has slowed and attainment has fallen since the previous inspection due to significant changes in staffing.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in all year groups, particularly in writing. This means that standards are not as high as they could be by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 which results in achievement that requires improvement.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not always give pupils work that challenges their abilities. This is particularly true for the most able.
- Not all marking helps pupils to improve their work and teachers do not always give pupils time to follow up the advice provided.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practice and extend their writing skills in longer pieces of work.
- Some middle leaders, who are new to their roles, are not effective enough in improving teaching and the achievement of pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have carefully managed the many changes in staffing. Teachers and support staff are all fully committed to rapid improvement. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are now rising.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of what needs to improve. Their detailed plans are very effectively driving improvement.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because of the skilled additional support they receive.
- The gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing rapidly.
- The amount of good or better teaching is swiftly improving and as a result, pupils are reaching higher standards than in recent years.
- Staff and governors have ensured that the school is 'A caring place to learn, play and grow'.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. Safeguarding practices are rigorously enforced and pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned by the school's strong values and promotion of tolerance and respect.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years and make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their individual starting points.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning of pupils in all classes and listened to some pupils read.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons, in a wide range of books and on display around school. They also spoke to pupils frequently during the inspection and met groups of pupils to discuss their views of school.
- Inspectors made very careful checks on records of the progress of pupils and their behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including the school's own view of its performance, plans for improvement and policies and procedures.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and members of the inclusion team. Inspectors met governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors also checked on the work of governors and a range of documents, particularly those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the 16 responses to the online Parent View survey and the 84 responses to the school's own recent survey of parental opinion. Inspectors also spoke to parents attending the school's Parents Evening.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 39 responses to the voluntary questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Buckley	Additional Inspector
James Reid	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been significant staff changes since the last inspection, for example, due to staff leaving for promotion. The deputy headteacher, special needs co-ordinator, Key Stage 2 leader, early years leader, literacy leader and mathematics leader are all new in post. Eight of the fourteen current teachers were not working at the school at the time of the previous inspection in 2012.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils is from other ethnic backgrounds or speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil-premium funding is well above average. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has full-time Reception classes and a part-time Nursery.
- In 2014, the school did not meet the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school has a number of awards including the Inclusion Quality Mark, Healthy Schools, Arts Mark Silver, Active Mark and ICT Mark.
- The school works in close partnership with Armitage Church of England Primary School, Ardwick, Manchester, Werneth School and various sports coaches.

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

- Improve teaching and raise pupil's achievement, particularly in writing, by ensuring that:
  - teachers consistently use information on how well pupils are learning, to plan tasks that challenge the abilities of all pupils, particularly the most able
  - comments in teachers' marking make it clear to pupils how to improve their work, particularly when applying their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, and making sure pupils have time to respond
  - pupils have more opportunities to write longer pieces of work.
- Strengthen the contribution of middle leaders, particularly those new to role, by:
  - ensuring they are more effective in checking whether their actions to improve the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils have been successful.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has carefully managed the many changes in staff over the last two years, including senior and middle leaders. She has very effectively resolved weaker teaching to address the underachievement and inconsistent progress across school.
- Ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, the headteacher has unified the changing staff team in sharing her vision and determination for the school to become the best it can be. By bringing the whole school community together and raising expectations of what pupils can and should achieve the school is now firmly focused on continuous improvement. As a result the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and their attendance are improving.
- Leaders have good capacity to improve the school further; their self-evaluation is honest and accurate and plans for improvement are well focused. They are quickly eradicating inconsistencies in teaching and in the progress of pupils. Discussions with staff reflect their full commitment to driving up standards. A typical staff comment was, 'Staff give 110% at all the times and have got the children's best interests at heart'. Morale is high because staff feel appreciated and well supported.
- Regular checks on teachers by senior leaders are improving their performance and the progress of pupils. However, leaders fully understand that further improvement is needed if pupils are to make consistently good progress in all classes.
- Staff are given good support to improve and access to good quality local and national training. They also have the opportunity to share their practice with colleagues in school and in the local clusters of schools.
- Rigorous checks are made by senior leaders on the progress of all groups of pupils across school to make sure they are making the progress expected for their age. Decisive action is taken to provide precisely targeted support to those in danger of underachieving, particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Senior leaders have ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used wisely to provide targeted additional support to help them achieve as well as others in school.
- Middle leaders, including those new to role, are extremely enthusiastic and are fully supportive of the whole school vision for improvement. However, they are not all fully effective in checking on the impact of any changes they make to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school places a firm emphasis on equality of opportunity. Although occasionally the most able do not make optimum progress, the overall promotion of equal opportunities to learn is good.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and good relationships are fostered through strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils learn a great deal about different faiths and cultures through the school's excellent link with Armitage Church of England Primary School which serves a diverse community. Pupils work together and respect one another's differences.
- School leaders have successfully linked subjects in a very creative and stimulating range of carefully chosen question based topics and themed events such as Science Week. Pupils enjoy a wide range of visits, visitors and residentials. Pupils eagerly take part in the many exciting opportunities they have to enjoy art, music, and dance and perform in school productions. They also benefit from using a range of computers to support their work and to learn programming.
- British values are promoted well. School council members eagerly discussed how they make decisions that are fair and based upon what the majority of pupils think and want. The school emphasises the importance of the rule of law and tolerance of the views of others. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school use of the additional funding for physical education and sports is excellent. The use of a specialist sports teacher from Werneth School and the engagement of sports coaches at lunchtime has improved staff expertise and increased opportunities for pupils to develop skills and participation in additional clubs and competitive sports. This has led to increases in participation rates in clubs and teams and improved pupils' desire to eat healthily and exercise.
- Very strong links exist with parents. A typical parent comment was about the 'fabulous support' received by her child who recently joined the school and as a result had 'settled in quickly and now loves school'.
- The local authority has provided good quality support in helping check the accuracy of school judgements and in providing staff and governor training.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well led and has a wealth of skills, expertise and experience. Governors provide rigorous challenge and support and are absolutely determined to see the current improvements in teaching and achievement further embedded. They visit regularly, particularly the Chair of the Governing Body and the safeguarding governor. Governors benefit from strong links to teachers and

different classes. This helps them to check on good quality information they receive about the quality of teaching and the progress of all groups of pupils. They rigorously monitor performance management including teachers' pay progression and make sure that it is closely linked to improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and that pay rewards are appropriate. Governors keep a close check on school finances and ensure extra funding for disadvantaged pupils and physical education and sports is used wisely and its impact tracked. Governors keep a close eye on policy and practice. They are right to be confident that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet requirements. This is because the Safeguarding governor makes regular visits to school to meet with staff and check that policy and procedures are put into practice.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are eager to learn, polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Pupils' enjoyment in learning is reflected in their rising attendance. A typical pupil comment was, 'I like this school because all the staff are friendly and helpful.'
- Pupils get on well with each other and play well together during break and lunchtimes. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being a member of the school council, a playground friend or a sports ambassador. They also enjoy raising money for charitable causes such as Red Nose Day or the Christmas shoe box appeal for children in Africa or to help the 'Stop Ebola' campaign. Pupils appreciate and respect other cultures and traditions and the right to hold different beliefs. As one pupil said, 'No-one is right or wrong. We all have the right to believe different things because we are all equal.'
- Pupils told inspectors just how much they enjoy the many clubs on offer, such as choir, dance, football, multi-sports, computer club or learn to play the guitar. They particularly enjoy taking part in activities organised at lunchtime by specialist sports coaches and trips and residential visits.
- The very positive and trusting relationships with staff boosts pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and encourages them to try their best. Pupils respond well to the staff because they care about them as individuals.
- When work is challenging and closely meets their learning needs, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils is sometimes outstanding. However, when planned activities do not interest pupils or stretch pupils' abilities well enough, small numbers of pupils drift off task and this slows their progress.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand about the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. They say that on the very few occasions that bullying happens, it is always dealt with properly by staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, particularly when using the internet. This is because of the good work done in school and the support for parents. As one pupil said wisely, 'Never share personal information with someone you don't know.'
- Parents' responses in Parent View, the school's own surveys and the views of those who spoke to inspectors, show they are confident that their children feel safe and are well looked after and kept safe.

## The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved due to recent staff changes. However, although teaching in the early years is good, teaching requires improvement because there is still inconsistency in practice across the school. There has not been sufficient time to tackle all the weaknesses in the achievement of pupils, particularly in writing.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is pitched at the right level for pupils, particularly the most able. This results in pupils finding tasks either too easy or too hard. The most able pupils sometimes wait too long for more demanding work and this slows the progress they make.
- Recent improvements to the way phonics (the sounds that letters make) are taught in the early years and Key Stage 1 has improved the progress that pupils are now making. During the inspection Year 1 pupils accurately remembered the sound 'oi' makes to successfully read 'A coin in the soil'. Reading continues to be taught systematically as pupils move through school and this is aiding their improving progress and love of reading.

- Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading or mathematics. This is because teachers do not always provide pupils with tasks that challenge them to write at length in order to develop their ideas.
- Teachers are placing greater focus on the consolidation of basic skills in mathematics. Pupils are given more opportunities to apply their skills to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of concepts in solving problems.
- The quality of teachers' marking is improving. There were some good examples seen during the inspection of pupils fully understanding the 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' marking system which celebrates what pupils have done well and points out areas for improvement. However, the quality of guidance and opportunities for pupils to act on the advice are not consistent throughout school. This is particularly so when pupils are applying their writing and mathematical skills across subjects and this is hindering the progress pupils are making.
- Staff are very caring and know the pupils well as individuals. Strong relationships are built on mutual respect and a clear focus on developing pupils' learning and personal skills in a nurturing environment. Well trained teaching assistants provide good support to those who need extra help, particularly those identified as having special educational needs and this is aiding their engagement and progress.
- Pupils especially enjoy learning when work is interesting, motivating and makes them think hard. This was seen in a Year 3 English lesson where pupils were inspired to choose words that would hook the reader. Most able writers produced work of a high standard, writing sentences such as, 'Suddenly a dark mysterious shadow with red evil eyes came out of no-where'.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment over time in reading, mathematics and particularly in writing has been significantly below what is expected of them by the time they leave Year 2 and 6. This is because there has been too much variability in the quality of teaching between classes and expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough in the past.
- In 2013, attainment by the end of Year 6 fell sharply from broadly average to significantly below average overall. This decline continued in 2014 when attainment was significantly below average in reading, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar and in particular in writing. The proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress were not high enough.
- Inspection evidence shows that teaching is improving strongly and so is pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of current pupils is much improved across school. Attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 in particular is rising and more pupils are working at a higher level than in previous years. However, achievement still requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress as they move through school.
- Results in the Year 1 national screening check on reading in 2014 improved greatly on the previous year and were close to average, reflecting their good progress in understanding of the sounds that letters make. Pupils continue to develop their skills and love of reading as they move through school.
- Achievement in writing is improving because of a greater focus on giving pupils more opportunities to talk about their work and write in creative ways. The quality of handwriting and presentation is also improving.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was, almost two years behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics and over two years behind in writing. Compared to others nationally, pupils were nearly a year behind in reading and mathematics and over two years behind in writing. However, the gaps in attainment between current disadvantaged pupils and others in school are narrowing rapidly or are non-existent.
- The achievement of the most able pupils has not been good enough in the past and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics has been too low. Although there is an improving picture for current pupils with more pupils now working at the higher levels than in previous years, it still varies between classes. In some classes, most able pupils are making good progress because pupils are consistently given work that stretches their abilities and deepens their understanding, but in other classes they are not making quick enough progress, particularly in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes better progress than other pupils because of the early identification of their individual needs and the skilled additional support they receive.

**The early years provision****is good**

- Children usually start school with skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in their communication and language and personal development. They settle quickly and grow in confidence due to well established routines and a safe and stimulating learning environment.
- Children benefit from consistently good teaching over time and very caring staff who form highly positive relationships with the children and their families. As a result, all children, including the most able and those with special educational needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their different starting points. The proportion of children who are reaching a good level of development when they enter Year 1 is improving.
- Children's learning needs are identified early so that they quickly receive any additional support they require. Staff observe children closely to assess how well they are learning both indoors and outside and plan further opportunities for them to follow their interests and develop their skills and understanding. Staff ensure there is a good mix of learning opportunities that children choose for themselves or a led by adults. As a result, children develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills well.
- The staff effectively prompt and encourage children's learning and give them lots of opportunities to talk about their learning. Children responded eagerly to the topic 'People who help us' and were fully engrossed in constructing a new van for Postman Pat and a fire engine. They enthusiastically explained their designs and how they would make windows and doors. Other children followed their interest well in developing a fairy garden outside with a fairy school. Others were excitedly preparing potions for the fairies out of pasta and cereals.
- The teaching of phonics is good. This helps children to become confident in the sounds that letters make and assist them in reading labels and their favourite books.
- There are good opportunities for children to talk about their writing and staff guide them skilfully in how to hold their pencil and how to form recognisable letters.
- Children in Reception eagerly write out number sentences such as  $6+3=9$  and challenging questions from staff retain the children's interests. Other show confidence in counting and recognising shapes.
- The behaviour of children is good and sometimes outstanding. They are happy, listen attentively, concentrate well and share and tidy up sensibly. Children show a good awareness of safety.
- The leadership of the early year's provision is good. Children's learning is well organised and staff have a clear focus on ensuring the development of the whole child. The leader has a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for further improvement and ensures children's learning is captured and shared regularly with parents.



## 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>	106104
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	456156

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	300
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sean Powell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Whitehead
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 430 3418
<b>Email address</b>	school.office@st-marks.stockport.sch.uk

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