

# St Mark's Primary School

St Mark's Road, Mitcham, CR4 2LF

**Inspection dates** 2–3 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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 headteacher's and interim headteacher's clear vision and ambition for the school are shared and understood by governors and staff.
- Senior leaders and staff work closely as a team. There is a clear sense of common purpose in the school and morale is high.
- Governors have managed the school decisively and calmly through a period of significant change in leadership. As a result, the school is now more settled and pupils continue to achieve well.
- Pupils in all year groups make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because of good teaching. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage in education.
- The early years provision is good and leaders have taken action to ensure further improvement in outcomes.
- The behaviour of the pupils is exceptional. They support each other extremely well and enjoy school. The school keeps pupils very safe and secure.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely to support pupils' learning. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress.
- The curriculum promotes the school's values through a range of interesting and well-planned activities. This promotes British values well and ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- The school actively involves parents in their children's education and encourages them to participate in a range of activities. Parents are very supportive of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The limited academic challenge in some lessons for more-able pupils means they are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always follow up their own guidance to pupils when they mark their work.
- The specific roles and responsibilities of the newly appointed senior leaders are not sufficiently clear.
- Governors are not stringent enough in holding senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.
- Although standards for Key Stage 1 pupils are improving, they are below national averages over time.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in 17 lessons, of which five were joint observations with members of the school's senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the interim headteacher and the substantive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and teaching assistants. Inspectors also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. In addition, a meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents at the beginning of the school day and after the school production. Parents' views from the school's own questionnaires were analysed. There were insufficient responses on Parent View to be considered during inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of information, including data on pupils' achievement. In addition, planning and monitoring documentation used by teachers to check on how well the school is doing were reviewed. Inspectors also examined minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Pupils' books were also scrutinised.
- The views of staff were analysed through the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Vanessa Ward, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Alexander

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups; the proportion is over two-and-a-half times the national average. The three largest groups in the school are pupils who come from a Black African heritage (over one quarter of pupils in the school), White British (around one fifth) and pupils from an Asian background (one in ten).
- Almost two thirds of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is above the national average. However, only a few are in the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is greater than the national average, at over one third of the pupils on the school roll.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is almost twice the national average.
- A larger-than-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There is a breakfast club on the school site. This is managed by the school and therefore was part of this inspection.
- The school currently uses alternative provision to provide off-site education for one pupil.
- The headteacher of Poplar School, Merton supports the headteacher. She is a local leader of education (LLE).
- The interim headteacher has been leading the school during the time the newly appointed headteacher has been on family leave. Both were present during this inspection.
- The early years has a Nursery which is part time with different groups for morning and afternoon sessions.
- There is a pre-school setting called Little Sparkles. This provides early education for children aged two, three and four years. The setting was inspected by Ofsted in April 2015 and the report is on the Ofsted website. It was not inspected as part of the inspection of the school.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide more consistent opportunities to extend the learning of the most-able pupils
  - pupils follow the feedback given to them in their books on how to improve their work
  - leaders improve the quality of written feedback given to teachers on the quality of their teaching by ensuring that areas for improvement relate to the impact on pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the roles and responsibilities of newly appointed senior leaders are clearly defined
  - leaders and governors make full use of the robust guidance available from the local authority representative.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The high expectations and ambition of the newly appointed headteacher are shared by staff, governors and senior leaders. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a period of significant change at senior leadership level. This has been managed effectively by the headteacher, interim headteacher, governors and senior leaders who have been well supported by the local authority. Pupils are settled, achieve well and are enthusiastic about their school.
- The interim headteacher has high expectations and gives good quality support to staff; they feel valued and motivated. Systems for planning, teaching, marking and behaviour in the school are clear; staff morale is good. One member of staff commented favourably that 'people know where we stand'.
- Middle leaders, responsible for subjects and whole-school aspects, are developing their skills well. There is a positive culture where examples of good teaching practice are increasingly shared. Teachers and teaching assistants are also given good opportunities to improve their skills through training, for example e-safety and phonics training. Staff work collaboratively and have a good understanding of how to support pupils across the age range.
- Leaders have effective systems to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, for example through regular assessments, teacher progress meetings and action plans. Consequently, teachers are able to intervene quickly to provide support in individual cases. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes through regular meetings and performance management targets.
- Senior leaders in the school have a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The two recently appointed assistant headteachers work very closely to support the interim headteacher. However, it is not always clear what their individual areas of responsibility are.
- Leaders plan the curriculum carefully to ensure that it is broad and balanced. As a result, pupils have many opportunities to develop the range of their learning, for example on 'Fabulous Friday' every week when all pupils learn Spanish, music and physical education from subject specialist teachers. Leaders have accurately identified the need to improve the curriculum for history and geography. Consequently, they have introduced new approaches, for example the use of historical objects which encourages pupils to 'think like a historian'. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of the importance of history. After-school clubs promote pupils' engagement in a wide range of activities.
- Leaders manage the performance of staff effectively and robustly. Teachers and teaching assistants have clear targets which are linked to pupils' progress. These also include their own individual development aims. However, areas for improvement given to teachers after lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on the impact on pupils' learning. Consequently, teachers do not receive clear and consistent guidance on how to improve.
- The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school takes every opportunity to broaden pupils' skills in these areas in lessons and assemblies. As a result, pupils contribute well to the ethos of the school and have an excellent understanding of living in modern Britain.
- The school engages exceptionally well with parents, who are very positive about the school. One parent commented that it is 'easy to communicate with teachers'. The school offers support and guidance to parents, for example through an employability workshop and awareness raising on the issue of female genital mutilation.
- The school provides opportunities for parents to come into school and support their children's learning, such as through a mathematics learning programme. Parents also come into school to lead faith-based assemblies for Diwali and Eid. As a result, pupils have respect for each other and for their differing family and cultural experiences. There is a strong sense of community throughout the school.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively with well-planned lessons and the employment of specialist staff. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of different sports and do so enthusiastically. There is an effective partnership with Chelsea Football Club which provides equipment and coaches.
- Leaders ensure that additional pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve well through specific interventions. Additional support to attend breakfast club, art therapy and the subsidising of uniform purchase is provided. These support pupils' emotional and social development so that they can concentrate fully at school. A strong thread throughout the school is the successful promotion of equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and tackling discrimination.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements and are secure and effective. Staff are fully trained and all required checks are carried out on staff new to the school.

- The local authority has continued to support the school effectively through a period of significant change at senior leadership level. Clear, unambiguous and accurate feedback to the school is provided, supported by clear guidance on improvement. This has been instrumental in improving standards and stability for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the school well and have high ambitions for the pupils' achievement. They are effective in holding the leadership to account and routinely checking the school's data on how well the pupils are doing. They visit regularly and have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school, for example the need to improve further early years provision and the curriculum in foundation subjects.
  - Governors have ensured that effective interim headteacher arrangements have been in place and that the appointment process for the permanent headteacher was robust. As a result, the school has been able to ensure that pupils continue to do well, with good capacity to develop further.
  - Governors appreciate the value of the external advice available to them from the local authority representative and are aware of the importance of accurate self-evaluation. Governors' meetings focus on outcomes for pupils but the minutes of some meetings suggest that this is not sufficiently stringent.
  - Governors are knowledgeable about of the performance management arrangements for teachers and the school's process for pay awards linked to good performance. They support the school's approaches for tackling teacher underperformance.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school has a very clear behaviour policy based on high expectations and processes are followed assiduously by all staff. Consequently, pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour at all times and recorded incidents in the school logs are rare. Pupils show respect towards each other, are very polite to visitors and have excellent manners. This judgement is also supported by the views of staff, parents and pupils who are exceptionally positive about the school and the behaviour of pupils.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and take pride in their work, which is neatly presented. In lessons, pupils are motivated and enthusiastic and work together outstandingly well. For example, in a physical lesson pupils quickly moved into group work as instructed and engaged in the activities very effectively therefore increasing their skills. The school gives careful consideration to building confidence in speaking English for children who join speaking little or no English, such as encouraging a fellow pupil to help a new pupil learn English through play rather than just saying the word.
- The school manages pupils' behaviour during break time and lunchtime exceptionally well. Pupils understand the importance of turn-taking while enjoying creative play on the pirate ship, for example. Pupils demonstrate harmonious behaviour while engaged in exciting and stimulating activities.
- Pupils are taught about difference and respect. They are able to take responsibility for others, such as through the buddy system where pupils welcome new pupils who join during the year.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for and influence what happens in the school, for example through the school council, 'You said, we did' display in hall. The prominent display on British values emphasises the rule of law, mutual respect, tolerance of other faiths and cultures, individual liberty, and celebrates the pupils' enjoyment of the Queen's visit to Mitcham. Consequently, pupils have a sense of belonging in the school and as a part of British society.
- Attendance is above average and pupils arrive promptly at school and for lessons.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This judgement is strongly supported by parents who report that their children are very safe and well cared for at school.
- The curriculum is very well planned and encourages pupils to understand and manage risk. Pupils are taught to stay safe in wide range of situations. For example, the life skills course for Year 6 pupils includes talks from external speakers on a range of topics including money management, e-safety and using public transport.
- The school is proactive in promoting safety through engaging with the wider school community, particularly parents. The school takes an active role in supporting parents with practical issues, such as

housing and employability workshops. The school provides excellent advice and support for parents. Consequently, they feel included in the work of the school in understanding how to keep their children safe. The school has proactively challenged incidents of derogatory language and, as a result, it is very rare.

- Pupils are well looked after throughout the day and there are excellent relationships with all staff, including teaching assistants, who care for and support the pupils' pastoral needs in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Staff are highly trained in safeguarding practice and pupils say they feel safe. Pupils understand about bullying and confirm that there are very few incidents of bullying which are dealt with effectively.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan carefully to build on what the pupils already know and to develop pupils' skills and understanding well over time. The relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are very positive. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic to learn and make good progress.
- Teaching is typically and consistently good because teachers build very strong relationships with the pupils. They use questioning expertly to challenge pupils to consider alternatives and select the correct answer. For example, in a Spanish lesson the teacher used a game to encourage the pupils to build their use of the target language; pupils were eager to contribute and did so with confidence.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and mostly provide helpful advice. In some cases, however, the written feedback given to teachers on areas for improvement lacks sufficient focus on the impact on pupils' learning.
- The quality of teaching overall is not yet outstanding because some teachers do not always match the work appropriately to the ability of the pupils. For example, more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 are not always set work that is sufficiently challenging. One pupil said to the inspector, 'I want them to make it harder.'
- The school has recently introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 1, which the school's data show is having a very positive effect on these pupils' learning. In other lessons, the teaching of mathematics demonstrates good planning and the teacher's expert questioning results in pupils engaging well in their learning. As a result, pupils develop mathematical skills well.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is rigorous. Pupils are able to break down unfamiliar words and make inferences from the text, which they demonstrated when inspectors listened to them reading. The school has invested in providing a wide range of interesting reading books; pupils demonstrate excellent reading skills and enjoy reading.
- Teaching assistants support the learning of pupils well in lessons. They provide appropriately targeted support for those pupils with additional needs, enabling all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their writing skills and pupils' work in books show examples of a range of writing skills. There are examples of outstanding progress in both handwriting and extended writing because of the clear and regular guidance from teachers.
- The school has developed a very clear marking policy which is consistently followed by teachers and is understood by the pupils. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils make the corrections or improvements suggested. Consequently, not all pupils learn as much as they could from their mistakes or learn to develop their responses further.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 over time has been variable. The outcomes for the 2014 phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check for Year 1 show that the proportion achieving the expected standard was well above the national figure. School records indicate a similar outcome for the current Year 1 cohort. This reflects the strong focus on reading and literacy skills that is central to the school.
- Given this good start to school, the outcomes over time for Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have been less convincing, and generally below national averages. Leaders have been aware of this and have focused work on this profile, particularly the outcomes for writing. As a result, progress monitoring for this year group indicates that Year 2 pupils are on track to improve the proportion achieving the expected and higher levels in reading, mathematics and particularly writing, as



evidenced by the scrutiny of pupils' books.

- Pupils' achievement over Key Stage 2 is more consistent. The 2014 attainment outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were above average at both the expected and higher levels. All groups within the school show a similarly strong profile. Overall, taking pupils' starting points into consideration and the progress made across all the key stages, the current profile of achievement is good.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress overall. The 2014 results for Year 6 showed that in reading, disadvantaged pupils were in line with other pupils nationally, and about one term behind in writing and mathematics. This shows that disadvantaged pupils do well when compared with all pupils nationally.
- The 2014 comparison between disadvantaged and other pupils in the school showed that pupils were about a term-and-a-half behind in writing, and for mathematics around two terms behind. The school's 2015 data indicates that there have been further improvements in these measures, with disadvantaged pupils eradicating the gaps with other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is better than that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects the excellent support with individualised programmes for pupils, effectively managed by the inclusion manager.
- The progress made by the small number of more-able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is stronger than that of the comparable national group and all pupils nationally. School leaders are aware of the need to ensure that pupils in this group continue to receive the appropriate challenge in all subjects.

### The early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age, and particularly so in communication and language skills. The effective provision ensures that, from their individual starting points, the children make good progress. By the end of their Reception Year the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is in line with the national average. The progress is not as strong for the very few children who begin their education with skills and abilities which exceed those typical for their age.
- The early years provision has been through significant changes in staffing and leadership since the beginning of the school year. The coordinator is an enthusiastic, skilled and knowledgeable leader. Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a strong commitment for further improvement in terms of academic and personal development. School leaders are developing the more effective use of specific outcome data to target improvements. There are effective links with the separate pre-school provision on the school site.
- The children make good progress across all areas of learning because the curriculum ensures activities are interesting, as well as developing skills and understanding. For example, many activities are focused on developing language skills. In the Reception class, children enjoyed acting out jobs that would be undertaken on a beach and talking about these with partners. This built up their understanding of sentence structure and the vocabulary relating to the jobs they were describing. It is the learning which results from activities such as these that results in the children being well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff know the children well and communication with parents is effective. Parents appreciate the ease of communication with staff in order to share and support the learning undertaken by their children.
- Records of the children's progress are extensive and are clearly used as working documents. The interests shown and progress made by each child are recorded accurately and this informs planning for further activities. There is a strong focus on inclusion and planning specific and individualised activities, particularly for developing communication and language skills.
- The staff in the Nursery and Reception class work effectively as a team using the planning effectively to guide their work and assessments of children. Teaching is typically good and sometimes better. The planned outdoor provision in the Nursery is a particular strength, capturing the children's interests with a vibrant, exciting and safe learning environment. There is a good balance of learning activities, including those that arise from the children's interests and those directed by adults. Children enjoy learning and enthusiastically engage in activities.
- The early years provision is both an orderly and active community where the children learn and play happily and safely. The children are well cared for by adults. In all activities the children behave exceptionally well.

## 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>	102645
<b>Local authority</b>	Merton
<b>Inspection number</b>	448708

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	254
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sandy Cowling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Wright (interim headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8648 2339
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