

St Mark's C of E Primary School

Manor Road, Brighton, BN2 5EA

Inspection dates	30 September–1 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, has a clear vision for the school and has strived towards this with focus and determination.
- Governors know the school very well and support its work tirelessly.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are generally well mannered and polite.
- The school provides a very nurturing environment in which pupils feel valued. Every pupil is supported well to raise their achievement.
- Staff are excellent role models. They demonstrate and develop British values throughout the school.
- Leaders promote equal opportunities and diversity successfully.
- Pupils feel very safe, and the school has well-developed systems and structures to support vulnerable pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils have made accelerated progress, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. These pupils progress as well as and sometimes better than other pupils, as a result of meticulous analysis of their performance and targeted support.
- Teachers plan and teach engaging and exciting learning. Recent developments in writing have supported pupils to make rapid progress.
- The early years provision is strong. High-quality education and care are provided in a well-resourced environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the most-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, and therefore their progress is not as rapid as it could be.
- On occasions, teachers' weak subject knowledge and pupils becoming disengaged slows their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the most-able pupils are generally provided with sufficiently challenging activities which deepen their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Support teaching so that all pupils can make good progress throughout each lesson by:
 - ensuring activities are planned and taught to engage pupils and raise their achievement
 - eradicating pupils' disengagement from their work and any low-level disruption
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, has worked relentlessly to secure increased progress for all the pupils. Staff have shared an ambitious vision and have moved in a carefully planned, determined and concerted way towards improvement. Following the example set by the headteacher, all staff model and maintain positive relationships between themselves and with all in the school community.
- Rigorous checks are made, in all aspects, to determine the school's strengths and weaknesses and the progress pupils make. Regular meetings are held with each teacher to identify any areas of support that are needed. This is swiftly put into place, with improvement expected and checked on closely. This process links effectively to the management of teachers' performance. The senior leadership team engages well with colleagues outside the school who analyse information and have significantly supported the school to improve in a very focused way.
- Through a very nurturing environment, every pupil is actively helped to make rapid progress in their learning, and the school celebrates this in a range of ways. Equal opportunities and diversity are strengths in the school. Staff and pupils know that discriminatory, prejudicial or extremist behaviour is unacceptable.
- Pupils' personal development is supported effectively through regular opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Staff and governors ensure the promotion of British values is strong. Pupils are encouraged to learn tolerance and respect for different lifestyles to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The school provides professional development in a planned way, and this is really valued by the staff as it is having a very positive impact on the progress pupils are making. This is leading to much greater consistency in the school, which further benefits pupils' progress as they move through. Strong support is in place for new teachers and, as a result of this, teaching is improving. More experienced teachers help new teachers in a very constructive way, and are keen to share good practice with them.
- The pupil premium is successfully closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. In some year groups, the significant group of disadvantaged pupils achieve better than the others. Many interventions take place and these are adapted to the pupils' needs. Several pupils receive in-class support, which helps them to learn more successfully.
- Additional funding for the primary physical education and sport premium is used effectively to benefit pupils' health and well-being. Coaches provide a range of extra activities including football, dance and tag rugby. As part of a local partnership, the school shares a specialist who trains the teachers, which improves learning, and pupils take part in competitive sports tournaments.
- The special needs coordinator ensures that pupils get the support they need in a carefully planned way. There are many and varied interventions which run for specific groups of pupils. These additional activities are checked to ensure they are improving outcomes rapidly for these pupils.
- Relatively new middle leaders know their subjects well, including the strengths and areas which need further development. They are actively involved in checking all aspects of their subjects and ensuring greater consistency in the teaching of their subjects across the school.
- The curriculum, which is taught in a creative way, is stimulating and well balanced, and meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. It provides rich experiences for pupils. English skills are developed through topics which enable pupils to improve their writing, while learning about history, geography and science. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, giving pupils opportunity to apply their learning to new contexts. For example pupils were seen using their understanding of fractions to work out, and simplify, the fraction of the class who were present. The curriculum contributes positively to the improvement in progress that pupils are making.
- Leaders have worked intently and successfully to establish pupils' understanding that they come to school to learn, and are intervening when teaching allows disengagement and disruptive behaviour.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is kept well informed by the headteacher. Governors provide support for the school leaders in communicating the direction of the school. They attend meetings about pupils' progress to gain a detailed view of how well pupils are doing. They know the actions being taken to support pupils and are available for parents whenever requested.

- is fully aware of the systems regarding teachers’ pay. Governors are acutely aware of the need to address underperformance. Challenging performance objectives are set for the headteacher.
- ensures the school’s funds are used effectively to enable pupils to make good progress, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. Governors have made some bold decisions to improve the quality of teaching in the school in order to raise pupils’ attainment. They are actively involved in the recruitment of staff, focused on ensuring that appointments benefit the school.
- ensures that procedures for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. Governors have received equalities training by the local authority and have engaged positively with the local racial harassment board.
- is very supportive of the school and its work. Governors are developing, with support from the diocese, their skills in challenging the school concerning its effectiveness.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders engage fully with parents, carers and professionals to ensure that all pupils are safe and well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Overall teaching is good in the school, and some aspects are outstanding, leading to pupils making accelerated progress. Teachers use assessment information to plan and teach lessons which build successfully on pupils’ existing skills and understanding. They have high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils focus on learning and teachers consistently reinforce their expectations of pupils’ behaviour throughout lessons to keep pupils engaged so progress is made.
- Teachers provide clear support for pupils who need to keep up, enabling them to achieve well. Through effective training, learning support assistants have become more skilled and therefore are more able to intervene and support learning as it is taking place in the classrooms.
- Marking and feedback enable pupils to improve their work. Pupils respond well to teachers’ comments in their books, and understand how these help them to make progress. Consistent methods of feedback are used throughout the school and so pupils know what to expect.
- As with the leaders, teachers are very good role models with and within their classes, and engage appropriately with parents.
- Teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) has improved greatly over the last year. The younger pupils in the school are successful in using their knowledge to read with fluency. Older pupils who are less confident readers are not always secure in these skills. There is support available to help these pupils, and systems to reward pupils who read at home.
- The school has worked systematically to improve writing. Teachers and pupils are enthusiastic about this development, which is enabling all pupils to make progress. Teaching is well structured and supports reluctant writers very successfully. Teachers use a range of ways to enable pupils to talk and discuss their work, which is very effective in increasing their understanding.
- Mathematics teaching is structured to enable pupils to revisit each aspect regularly, and pupils are now making better progress than previously, and showing good understanding. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are almost all making good progress. A significant proportion of these pupils are making better than expected progress and catching up well with all pupils nationally.
- From their various starting points, pupils are supported to achieve well, although the most able pupils on occasion do not benefit from more consistently challenging work to raise their achievement further.
- At times, teachers are not sufficiently knowledgeable or skilled to keep pupils focused on their learning. Pupils who become disengaged disrupt their own learning and sometimes distract other pupils from their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school environment is very nurturing, encouraging pupils to become self-confident. Learning mentors identify where pupils lack confidence and support these pupils effectively.
- The school has robust systems for safeguarding, and pupils feel very safe. This is confirmed by parents. The school takes its safeguarding role very seriously and has well-established methods and processes in place to support vulnerable pupils.
- The school has supported pupils by ensuring they know how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils explained to inspectors what this involved.
- The school keeps careful records of all forms of bullying and pupils are reminded by the school council in assemblies about the need to report this. The school council recently ran a poster competition to encourage pupils to take bullying very seriously.
- There are many pupils who join the school at other than usual times. They are well supported to settle quickly and staff ensure their needs are identified and met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. A concerted effort to raise expectations for learning has had a very positive impact on pupils' behaviour, and led to a very significant reduction in exclusions.
- Attendance is lower than in most schools nationally, but is improving slowly. The school has had considerable success in reducing the proportion of pupils with persistent absence, working with an independent consultant. Punctuality is similarly followed up rigorously.
- The school provides an organised and tidy environment with displays of the school's 'Golden Rules' strategically placed. There is growing consistency in behaviour in classes, with little low-level disruption.
- Some pupils with specific behavioural, emotional and social needs, who may find it difficult to manage their own behaviour appropriately, are supported well by staff who ensure they do not disrupt learning.
- Staff and parents were positive about the school's development of improved strategies for behaviour, and the high level of nurture that is provided for pupils.
- The school develops all aspects of social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning and raises the expectations of pupils to act responsibly. For example in assemblies, pupils learn about people who have contributed to society and made a positive difference for others. They are challenged to emulate these character qualities.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Over the last year, all pupils in almost all year groups have made progress from their different starting points and a large proportion have made accelerated progress across the curriculum. The school has taken very effective action to address small inconsistencies in the pupils' progress.
- The many improvements to the curriculum and teaching have led to new knowledge, understanding and skills being securely developed.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language have made progress that is at least in line with other pupils and often better than other pupils. Support for them has been swiftly identified and put in place, with the pupils' progress checked regularly and interventions altered as necessary.
- Pupils read with enjoyment and this is celebrated through displays in the school. Their understanding and fluency is improving as their acquisition of phonics is now much more secure. While there are fewer pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check than the national average, the proportion is rising rapidly each year.
- Attainment is below that of most pupils nationally but is catching up rapidly due to the focus and improvement the school is making in teaching, learning and behaviour.
- The most-able pupils, while making expected progress, do not always make accelerated progress,

because some of the work they are given is too easy and lacks challenge.

- Pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next stage of education, particularly in the early years.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years, made up of the Nursery and Reception classes, is very well led by a coordinator who is new to the role. The leader knows the strengths and weaknesses well and has planned actions to address the areas that need improvement. The early years is a strength of the school.
- Children start Nursery as soon as they are three. By the end of Reception just over half of the children reach a good level of development. This is increasing and gaps in attainment are closing rapidly.
- Staff have a highly nurturing approach towards the children and manage any loss in concentration through a gentle encouraging approach. Pupils play together, cooperating and collaborating well. They also work well independently. They show good concentration, listening to each other and to adults well. They are motivated learners.
- Children play safely with each other and handle equipment, such as scissors, safely.
- Staff have a good knowledge of the individual needs of children. Observations in school are gathered electronically and made available to each individual child's parents. They also discuss children's needs regularly with parents. Staff extend children's learning through activities the children choose for themselves, supported by a rich and stimulating environment indoors and outdoors. Activities become challenging when adults intervene in a timely way. For example when children discover letters in the sand, the adult extends their learning by telling them the sound the letter makes. The early years meets the needs of all groups of children well and enables them to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Support programmes, for example to improve children's speech and language, help the children to keep up with their peers. Staff discuss assessment information through meetings about children's progress to ensure any support needed is provided swiftly.
- Assessment is carried out and recorded in 'learning journals'. The learning support assistants are beginning to be involved in observations and identifying children's next steps in their learning. Parents are regularly informed about their child's progress. This enables them to support their child further at home and celebrate their success.

School details

Unique reference number	114545
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10005783
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deacon Julie Newson
Headteacher	Jane Fendley
Telephone number	01273 605588
Website	www.stmarks.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com
Email address	admin@stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 June 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school. It includes a Nursery class.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has increased rapidly, and is now broadly in line with other schools nationally. There is a significantly greater proportion of these children in the Nursery.
- Over half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority). This is significantly higher than most other schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than usual times is above average.
- There have been many changes of staff since the last inspection.
- The school is part of a city centre partnership and, through this, has received support from a local leader of education at Middle Street Primary.
- The governors have received support from the Chichester Diocese.
- A section 48 inspection (for faith schools) did not take place at the same time as this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. This included a learning walk. Some lessons were joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, talked to pupils about their work, observed assemblies and observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, middle leaders, local authority representatives, an independent consultant and the leader of the local schools' partnership. Discussions were also held with parents, pupils and governors.
- Pupils' work, progress information, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records and other documentation was looked at, as well as the school's own checks on its performance and the quality of teaching. The inspectors also considered the school's plan for improvement.
- Inspectors took into account the seven responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including written comments made by parents, as well as responses from 22 members of staff at the school.

Inspection team

Janet Sharp, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kusum Trikha	Ofsted Inspector

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