

St Mark's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Stafford Road, Shirley, Southampton, Hampshire SO15 5TE

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2017

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has set clear expectations for staff and pupils. Leaders have successfully addressed weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Governors, leaders and staff share high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Teaching and pupils' outcomes are now good.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and secure in school.
- From their starting points, all groups of pupils make good progress. Pupils who left Year 6 in 2017 made better progress than other pupils did nationally.
- While pupils achieve well in key stages 1 and 2, in the early years not enough children reach a good level of development. Provision in the early years has improved recently. However, it is not yet good because teaching and children's outcomes require improvement.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. Nevertheless, standards that pupils achieve in the foundation subjects are not as high as those in English and mathematics.
- Overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Additional funding is used effectively to enable pupils to make accelerated progress in most year groups. Nevertheless, attendance figures for this group of pupils are below the national average.
- Leaders use assessment information well to check the progress of pupils. Pupils who fall behind are identified quickly and offered useful support to catch up with their peers.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons.
- The school provides strong support for vulnerable pupils and families, making effective links with external agencies when necessary.
- Governors know the school well. They are clear about its strengths and apply strong analytical skills to their overview of its performance. They ensure that funding is used to good effect.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for children in the early years, by:
 - analysing more sharply the progress made by individuals and groups in order to address any weaker aspects of children's learning effectively.
- improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress in the foundation subjects.
- improve pupils personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - increasing levels of attendance and punctuality, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, supported well by her senior team, has worked diligently to address the issues identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is effective and pupils make good progress. The school is rapidly improving.
- Staff continually strive to improve. Many have undertaken additional training or have attended courses to expand their skills. Leaders ensure that teachers have clear performance management targets, focused on ensuring that their pupils make strong progress. New teachers in school are effectively supported to develop their skills so that their pupils make good progress.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching robustly. They efficiently monitor lessons, scrutinising pupils' work to check that the quality of learning is consistently good and different groups of pupils are making strong progress. Although teaching is now good in key stages 1 and 2, leaders are well aware that provision in the early years requires improvement.
- Leaders actively engage with other schools and the local authority as part of their work to improve the school. Leaders check the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' work with local colleagues. Teachers visit other schools to attend training and observe effective teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding to good effect to provide additional opportunities and learning support for disadvantaged pupils. Targeted interventions have resulted in disadvantaged pupils making strong progress in all subjects.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a clear understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and uses this to provide effective additional support in class. Funding for these pupils is used effectively, especially to provide specific interventions to support the learning of individual pupils. Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' moral, social and cultural development is taught well. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and care for each other reflect the school's positive ethos. They understand democracy and the importance of rules and laws. A culture of respect for others permeates the school and helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum puts considerable emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and on religious education. The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of trips and visitors into school. For example, a visit to a local Italian restaurant added meaning and reality to pupils' understanding of healthy eating and food preparation. Nevertheless, standards across the curriculum are not as high as those in English, mathematics and religious education.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education and sport funding well to offer a range of additional sporting equipment and activities. The resulting increase in participation rates is supporting pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.

- The local authority has provided effective support since the last inspection. It has regularly reviewed the impact of leaders on improving pupils' progress. Leaders use these external reviews well to sharpen their actions.

Governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious and make an effective contribution to the leadership of the school. They have clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result of governors' effective strategic direction and robust challenge, the school is now securing improved outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are well equipped to question the work of the school and provide effective challenge and support to school leaders, particularly on the use of pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other groups of pupils. Through detailed reports, committee meetings and visits into school, governors ensure that they consider first-hand evidence to hold leaders to account.
- Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities efficiently. They regularly review policies and procedures to ensure that these meet the needs of the school community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and robust. Records of recruitment procedures meet statutory requirements and induction arrangements are secure and comprehensive.
- Clear policies, procedures and systems are in place to safeguard pupils from harm. As a result, pupils feel safe and are kept safe in school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online, and know how to pass on concerns to adults. Pupils talk confidently about the school's strategy to tackle bullying, and know how to share their concerns with adults.
- Staff contribute to a vigilant safeguarding culture in school. Adults are trained well and have a thorough understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders make sure that all adults know how to report such concerns. The school engages actively with external agencies and support services to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The leadership team's relentless drive to raise standards has ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Teachers and teaching assistants carefully adapt their teaching to make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively to make good progress. Similarly, extra help provided for disadvantaged pupils is targeted well to improve their rates of progress.
- Effective questioning, from teachers and teaching assistants alike, enables pupils to think deeply and find out things for themselves, particularly when reasoning in mathematics.

- Good relationships and mutual respect between pupils and adults are evident throughout the school. As a result, pupils show high levels of engagement and good behaviour during lessons. Occasionally, when teaching is less strong, some pupils lose focus. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils reflect well on teachers' helpful feedback to identify what they need to do to make better progress. This enables pupils to be clear about how to achieve further success.
- Phonics teaching is well organised and effective. As a result, pupils demonstrate a secure grasp of phonics and read well throughout the school.
- The teaching of writing has been a focus for the whole school and, as a result, the quality of pupils' writing is improving. Pupils have valuable opportunities to apply their reading, writing and speaking skills in a variety of subjects across the curriculum.
- The teaching of mathematics is much improved and is effective. Teachers are confident in developing pupils' fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. They ensure that pupils understand and apply mathematics in different contexts. As a result, pupils use these skills to solve complex problems. For example, pupils calculated and compared the capacity of different football stadiums.
- Teaching in science is strong. Pupils make good progress and understand a broad range of scientific concepts. Pupils plan and conduct their own scientific investigations and record their findings accurately.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported and taught well. As a result, they make secure progress in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils are happy to speak to adults if they require support. There is a strong commitment by school leaders to develop pupils as rounded individuals. Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is well supported. Pupils are confident and self-assured learners.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and take pride in working hard and cooperating with others. This is helping them to make better progress. High expectations, strong moral values and an effective curriculum for pupils' personal, social and emotional development contribute well to pupils' understanding of safety and tolerance of others.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Many said that it was a happy school where their children felt safe and secure.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. For example, they are knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet. A few parents expressed concerns about bullying. Pupils understand that bullying is wrong. They confirmed that bullying of any kind is not tolerated. School records show that incidents

of bullying are rare but, when they do occur, are dealt with swiftly and effectively by leaders.

- The vast majority of pupils are enthusiastic and motivated to learn. They are happy to talk to adults about their school and their learning. There is an open culture where pupils are happy to discuss how they feel. They are proud of their school and of their work.
- In lessons, pupils are confident and understand what it means to be successful learners. This is because they frequently talk to the teacher about their learning and how they can improve.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility, such as through the school council or by acting as playground buddies. As a result, pupils have a sense of pride in their school.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a nurturing, calm start and end to the day. Pupils of different ages talk and play together happily. In the breakfast club, adults help pupils to develop healthy eating habits.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The behaviour of pupils is tracked on the behaviour target board in each classroom. Pupils understand this and challenge themselves to remain high on the board at all times. If a pupil is asked to move their name down on the board, they are also told what they have to do to move up again. This has a positive impact on the culture and climate in classrooms.
- The school is a calm and orderly learning environment and pupils conduct themselves well in lessons. Pupils are very attentive and demonstrate good levels of effort in their work. When tasks are engaging and challenging behaviour is positive.
- Pupils enjoy being active and playing with their friends. Occasionally, a small minority of key stage 2 pupils do not behave consistently well at breaktimes.
- Attendance has been improving over time and is now just below the national average. However, in 2017 attendance figures declined. The school has provided support for individual pupils whose attendance was low. As a result, many of these pupils now attend school regularly. A small number are still persistently absent or late.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Work in pupils' books and the school's assessment records across all year groups show a marked improvement in progress from the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that teachers have raised the bar for what pupils can achieve. Historical underachievement has been addressed successfully.
- From low starting points, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2017 made better progress than other pupils did nationally.
- Current pupils in key stage 2 have made rapid progress. Consequently, most pupils are

working at their appropriate age-related standard in reading, writing and mathematics and larger proportions are now working at the higher standard. This is because teachers have stepped up their use of assessment information to ensure that teaching meets pupils' needs more precisely.

- In 2016, end of key stage 1 assessments showed that pupils attained in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, pupils' attainment declined in these subjects. However, pupils' progress, including those who were disadvantaged, was good from their low starting points at the end of early years.
- The current picture of progress across the school is good, particularly in English and mathematics. Changes made by leaders have been effective in raising standards. Nevertheless, pupils' rates of progress are lower in the foundation subjects.
- The school's development of pupils' phonics skills helps them to tackle words successfully when reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved and is now above the national average. However, current pupils in Year 1 in 2017 have gaps in their phonic understanding. The introduction of a new phonics system means there is increasing rigour in the teaching of letters and sounds. Pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has strengthened and accelerated since the previous inspection and many exceed expectations. Additional staffing and careful use of the pupil premium funding has strengthened the teaching of disadvantaged pupils. In some subjects, disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Work is well matched to their needs and effective support is provided to help with the challenges these pupils experience in their learning. Equally, pupils who speak English as an additional language make very good progress because of effective teaching.
- Parents were positive about the progress their children are making and feel the school provides them with useful information about their children's performance. Parents said the school helps them to understand and to work through language barriers when necessary.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years has not been effective enough to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching. From typically low starting points, children make progress, including disadvantaged children. However, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has remained below the national average and not enough children are prepared well for key stage 1.
- The headteacher and governors recognise that improvements are needed and have taken measures to address the weaknesses by making substantial changes to leadership and staffing arrangements since September 2017. While the impact of recent improvements is starting to emerge, leaders recognise that improvements in this part of the school are not yet secure.

- Resources and activities do not always interest or challenge children well. Outdoor learning is not effective in developing children's language and number skills and access for some children is limited. Some indoor provision does not support children's development well enough. As a result, children do not concentrate on their tasks and they become distracted.
- Teachers have made sure that assessment of what children know, understand and can do is more accurate than it has been in the past. This has helped leaders to identify which children are not prepared well enough for their transition into Year 1. Teachers plan carefully to support these children, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is helping to accelerate progress so that these children will be able to access the Year 1 curriculum successfully.
- Arrangements for safeguarding children are effective, in line with the rest of the school. Adults supervise children well. They ensure that children are taught to be safe and independent in all areas of the early years provision. Adults are trained well and liaise effectively with outside agencies where necessary to ensure that children are safe. Children with high levels of need are supported effectively.

School details

Unique reference number	116342
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10032874

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Charlotte Walker
Headteacher	Stephanie Bryant
Telephone number	02380 772968
Website	www.st-marks.southampton.org.uk
Email address	info@st-marks-southampton.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 July 2015

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the school's leadership team. New middle leaders have been appointed and responsibilities of middle leaders have been restructured.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. A larger-than-average proportion of pupils enter or leave the school each year.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is just below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much larger than that found typically, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is also well above average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out 41 observations across the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out observations of four breaktimes and one lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed breakfast club and talked to pupils and staff.
- Inspectors met frequently with senior and middle leaders throughout the inspection. The lead inspector also met members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils during lessons and breaktimes, heard pupils read and met pupils formally.
- Inspectors took into account 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential survey. The lead inspector considered 12 free-text responses to this survey. Inspectors also spoke to parents bringing their children to school.
- Inspectors met teachers at different stages in their careers and spoke to members of staff at various times during the inspection. The lead inspector considered 19 responses to the school's staff survey. No pupil surveys were returned.
- The inspection team reviewed a wide range of the school's documents. These included the school's own evaluation of its performance, records of governors' work and information relating to the performance of pupils. In particular, inspectors examined records of work undertaken to raise standards and records of safeguarding and recruitment.

Inspection team

Marcia Goodwin, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Jenner	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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