

Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School

Mark Cross, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3PJ

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have been resolute in improving teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that pupils' outcomes have strengthened.
- Teachers have positive relationships with pupils. They know their pupils well. This helps teachers to plan interesting and engaging lessons that closely match pupils' needs.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. Fundamental British values and the school's ethos are integral parts of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teaching enables pupils to make good progress across year groups. However, too few pupils, in key stage 2, exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They develop high levels of concentration as they move through the year groups. Pupils are extremely well mannered and polite.
- Governors are knowledgeable and committed to school improvement. However, they do not always check on how well the plans for school improvement are progressing.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are superbly cared for. They are taught exceptionally well how to keep themselves safe.
- Children get off to an excellent start in early years. They make exceptional progress because of high-quality teaching and outstanding care.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that consistently high standards and expectations lead to a greater proportion of pupils working within the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.
- Ensure that governors hold leaders to account effectively by evaluating the success of leaders' school improvement actions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher has taken decisive action over the past year to improve teaching. As a result, current pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, has strengthened.
- The school has benefited from being part of the Saxonbury Federation of Frant and Mark Cross Primary Schools. Staff across the federation have worked together to improve the way pupils' work is moderated. The federation also provides high-quality training for staff. Staff value this and enjoy working with teachers from other schools.
- Leaders are very passionate about school improvement and have an accurate view of the school. They have identified the main areas that need improving and worked hard to galvanise staff in making changes. Plans for school improvement are well considered. However, governors' knowledge of the effects of leaders' actions is not as well developed.
- Leaders rightly view the curriculum as being integral to personal development. The curriculum is well planned and promotes fundamental British values. School displays promote the understanding of these values and links them to the school's ethos. Pupils emulate these values in their conduct, showing effective preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Staff feel valued by leaders. High-quality training concentrates on the right things. Leaders are mindful of staff workload when setting the school's direction.
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding very well. Pupils have a keen sense of their own social responsibility. For example, pupils worked hard on a project that highlighted the dangers of plastic pollution. They researched the issues, produced resources and created informative displays. Some pupils told the inspector that they had reduced their own use of plastic as a consequence of what they had found out.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. Leaders organise extra support in English and mathematics for disadvantaged pupils who need to catch up. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors are skilled and committed. They share a keen sense of responsibility, alongside leaders, to improve the quality of education at the school further.
- Governors challenge leaders in meetings about the effectiveness of their actions. They ask probing questions about leaders' initiatives. However, governors do not always check on how well the priorities for school improvement are progressing or whether objectives have been fulfilled.
- Governors receive appropriate training. They take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Governors ensure that relevant checks are performed on the suitability of staff. Safer recruitment training has increased governor confidence when interviewing

candidates for new roles.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding procedures and practices are well organised. Leaders ensure that checks on adults working in school are carried out diligently.
- Leaders have recently introduced new systems to improve safeguarding procedures further. Staff record any concerns they have about pupils and take immediate action if a child is at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that strong links exist with external agencies. As a result, extra support is swiftly put in place for pupils who require it.
- Staff receive appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training so that they are well informed about local and national safeguarding issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan learning well. They nurture strong relationships with pupils and ensure that resources are adapted to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
- Activities in lessons are challenging. Pupils think hard in order to complete tasks. They do this with enthusiasm. Pupils develop their reading and writing skills effectively during lessons.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations. Teachers use questioning to elicit thoughtful responses from pupils. This ensures that pupils enjoy lessons, particularly opportunities to persuade and debate. For example, in English, Year 3 pupils discussed synonyms for 'camouflage' to use in a story they were writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is a strength. Teachers plan activities that ensure that pupils have a thorough understanding of mathematical concepts. This gives pupils the confidence to solve complex problems. Pupils' progress in mathematics has strengthened because activities are planned conscientiously.
- Phonics is taught effectively, particularly in Year 1. Teachers' strong subject knowledge means that they adeptly demonstrate the sounds that letters make and help pupils to accurately decide how to apply these in spelling and reading. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils correctly identified the sound that 'c' makes in different words by playing a game involving a car driving down a road.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress because of well-planned teaching and teaching assistants' astute support. Pupils with SEND develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well across year groups.
- Teachers consistently follow the school's assessment policy, providing pupils with feedback that supports them in learning from their mistakes. Pupils make accurate corrections to work and reflect on how they will improve in the future.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct is excellent. In their work and play, pupils demonstrate consideration for others, a keen attentiveness to learning and a shared sense of moral responsibility. Pupils relish opportunities to provide peer support. For example, during the whole-school assembly, a small number of pupils stood at the front and demonstrated the actions and words to a song everyone sang.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Consequently, lessons are free from disruption and no time is wasted. Opportunities to learn are relished and appreciated.
- Pupils develop expert knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online. For example, older pupils reliably use 'SMART' (safe, meeting, accepting, reliability, tell) to maintain their personal safety when online.
- Pupils' work shows care and attention to detail. Across subjects, pupils present their work logically and neatly. This supports them in understanding the steps necessary to solve problems, particularly in mathematics, and in remembering what they have learned in previous lessons.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of valuable experiences for pupils to strengthen their knowledge of risk and keeping safe. As a result, pupils have a very astute understanding of how to be aware of dangers, for example in and outside of the home. Year 3 and 4 pupils learned about potential electrical dangers within the home, such as touching electrical things with wet hands.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are very considerate towards each other during social times. At lunchtime, pupils sit together in the school hall. Pupils are very well-mannered. Older pupils help younger pupils. This adds to the nurturing and harmonious atmosphere.
- During lessons, pupils concentrate hard on their work. They follow teachers' instructions with enthusiasm and diligence. As a result, pupils are quick to follow instructions and complete tasks.
- The very small number of behaviour incidents are meticulously recorded and followed up. Pupils understand the behaviour systems very well. They appreciate the importance of working together to make sure that everyone is able to learn in classrooms. As a result, pupils' behaviour in classrooms is exceptional.
- There are rare cases of bullying. When these do occur, pupils are confident that they are resolved swiftly by staff.
- Pupils attend school very frequently. Attendance in 2017 and 2018 was above the national average for primary schools. Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils do not miss school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, pupils' attainment in reading and writing was broadly average. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was below average. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was average.
- Leaders have been steadfast in improving outcomes for pupils. Consequently, current pupils make strong progress in reading and progress in writing and mathematics is strengthening quickly.
- Too few pupils exceeded the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018. More of the current most-able pupils now achieve higher standards, particularly in Year 6. Nevertheless, across year groups, the most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils get off to a strong start in early years and this prepares them well for key stage 1. In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in their phonics development. The school's progress information shows that all Year 1 pupils are developing their phonic knowledge well.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make good progress across a range of subjects. They make as much progress as other pupils nationally because of good teaching, close monitoring and effective support strategies.
- Pupils read widely and often. They are knowledgeable about different authors and genres. Throughout the school, reading is seen as important by pupils and this is supported by attractive displays. Daily reading lessons further support pupils in improving their reading and allow for discussions around language and the meaning of words.
- Work in books shows that pupils deepen their understanding in a wide range of subjects. Pupils' work in areas such as history, science and religious education shows that they understand increasingly complex concepts as they move through the year groups.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- In early years, children make excellent progress because of teachers' very well-considered planning and highly effective teaching.
- Leaders and staff have very high expectations of children. They ensure that children are challenged to reach high targets. When children start reception, they learn very quickly to write sentences, count and use basic number calculations.
- Well-presented learning journals capture children's improving skills in literacy and numeracy. Children's development is monitored closely so that teachers know where they need to improve and how well they are moving towards the early learning goals.
- Teachers plan activities very well. As a result, children are keen to learn and excited to be in class. Children's attention is captured quickly by interesting tasks. This means that children develop their concentration skills. For example, children increased their understanding of mathematical vocabulary and the properties of shapes by pretending

to be detectives and finding shapes around the classroom to write about.

- In 2018, children made excellent progress. Almost all children reached a good level of development. Over half exceeded this measure in physical development, mathematics and knowledge, skills and understanding.
- There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in early years. Children have opportunities to complete self-directed tasks during play or more focused activities based on numeracy or learning to recognise letters and words. Children are encouraged to think about their own learning and comment on how well they think they are doing. This supports children in developing their own ideas about what helps them to learn well.
- Leaders share their successful teaching strategies with colleagues from other schools. For example, leaders recently demonstrated strategies to improve writing in early years to a meeting of local teachers.
- Phonics teaching is very effective. Children develop their abilities to read and understand the sounds that letters make quickly because activities are very closely matched to their needs.
- Parents told the inspector that they value the high-quality communication from staff. Parents are also very impressed with the progress their children make. Leaders involve parents in their children's learning. They ask parents for their views frequently and hold informative events for parents. For example, leaders organised workshops for parents on phonics teaching where parents were shown the phonics teaching strategies used in early years.
- Children's personal development is exceptional. They learn self-regulation strategies quickly and show high levels of empathy for each other. They cooperate very well together.
- Teachers ensure that safety aspects of activities are considered and emphasised so that children develop their understanding of personal safety very well. For example, before making shapes with elastic bands, children were briefed on the dangers of misusing the equipment.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114558 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10046473 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 103 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Allison Holton |
| Executive Headteacher | Debbie Bennett |
| Telephone number | 01892 852866 |
| Website | www.markcrossce.e-sussex.sch.uk |
| Email address | exehead@markcrossce.e-sussex.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 4 June 2009 |

Information about this school

- Mark Cross Church of England School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are taught in one mixed-age class. Years 3 and 4 pupils are also taught in a mixed-age class, as are pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- The executive headteacher joined the school in January 2018.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average for primary schools.
- A section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning with the executive headteacher and the head of school in all classes across a range of subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, staff and governors.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school and during lunchtimes.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Documentation was scrutinised by the inspector, including the school's plans for improvement, the school's self-evaluation, reports on attendance and behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, minutes of governors' meetings and information on pupils' outcomes.
- The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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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