

# Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School

Manor Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5EA

---

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

---

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school's Christian motto of 'let your light shine' is present in every aspect of school life. Pupils beam with happiness to learn in a place where staff ensure that all pupils show care and respect for each other. Pupils are proud of the inclusive culture of their school. They learn that it is important for everyone to feel welcome. This means that bullying is very rare and any incidents are quickly resolved.

Pupils behave very well. The school's 'SHINE' behaviours make it clear what staff expect. All staff consistently model what these behaviours look like, so pupils understand how to comply. 'Shiny Time' on a Friday afternoon is a time for all pupils to celebrate the rewards which come from following the school rules. Pupils indulge in karaoke and sports games with their friends from across the school.

Leaders have high ambition for all pupils. However, currently, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, meaning they are not always well prepared for their next stages of learning. Leaders know this and are acting quickly to make sure every pupil can achieve their very best academically.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Significant changes in staff and school leadership, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, have slowed the school improvement journey. Despite this, leaders, governors, the diocese and the local authority are steadfast in their dedication to improve standards. They have a very clear vision for what they want every pupil to achieve. Leaders and governors use accurate information to clearly identify the school's priorities. They use external expertise to critically review the curriculum and provision in school. From this, they develop clear plans to move the school forward.

Staff make sure they know their pupils well. They quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders design effective support plans to identify what support pupils need to learn well. Staff receive training to help them apply these plans in the classroom. The 'Ocean Room' provides a supportive space for pupils with SEND to receive additional help with their learning. Therapies such as sensory circuits help pupils learn to use their bodies. Where needed, carefully developed learning plans make it clear to pupils what they must do to manage their feelings or how to ask for help when they need it.

Leaders know that the curriculum across each year group currently is not helping pupils learn well enough. The important knowledge that all pupils need to know is not identified clearly in all subjects. This means pupils do not always learn in a carefully ordered way. Pupils can find it hard to connect ideas together and remember learning over time. Assessment is also not used well enough to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers do not quickly spot what learning pupils need to revisit to help them develop secure subject knowledge.

Leaders know that the previous early years curriculum was not teaching children the knowledge they needed to be well prepared for Year 1. Leaders are now redesigning the early years curriculum to ensure that all children have the knowledge and skills they need for future learning. This work is still new and does not yet set out what children will learn across the whole year. However, there are now examples of much richer and more engaging learning. For example, in the seasons topic, children develop creative skills by understanding how to mix autumnal colours. They further develop their mathematical skills by sorting leaves by colour, size and length.

All staff have had the appropriate training to deliver the phonics programme. However, not all staff are yet delivering the programme with the same expertise. While leaders are quick to identify pupils who need help, not all staff know how to precisely identify and close the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Leaders are currently improving the effectiveness of the support given to pupils who find reading more difficult but this is still new. Consequently, these pupils are not currently reading as well as they should.

Leaders have forged strong partnerships with other local schools and organisations to make sure that all pupils have a wealth of opportunity to develop their skills and talents. For example, pupils can learn Russian or philosophy or take part in sport training sessions. Leaders raise pupils' aspirations through trips to local universities to help them start planning for an ambitious future. Leaders make sure that every child develops a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, happy and healthy.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding in school. They make sure that all staff have the training they need to be vigilant and report their concerns about pupils. Leaders take swift and effective action to seek help from external support where needed. They provide additional help for those pupils who need it, such as support groups for young carers.

Leaders ensure all pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They learn about the potential dangers that they may face while playing online. Pupils trust staff to help them if they report a worry.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, the important knowledge that leaders want all pupils to learn has not been clearly identified and ordered in a sequential way. Therefore, pupils remember knowledge as disconnected facts and cannot link ideas together.

Leaders must ensure that they complete their plans for the curriculum and embed these from early years through to Year 6.

- The support for pupils who are struggling to learn to read is not effective enough. As a result, too many pupils are not able to read well enough for their age. Leaders must ensure that staff are expertly trained to deliver the phonics curriculum and that interventions are effective in closing gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Checking what pupils have learned and remembered is not yet well embedded in all subjects. Therefore, teachers do not have clear oversight of how well the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils or what knowledge gaps pupils have. Leaders are aware of this. They must implement an effective process of assessment to ensure the curriculum is being successfully implemented for all.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114545
<b>Local authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241527
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	164
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chairs of governing body</b>	Amanda Healey and Allistare Smedley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Fendley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk/">www.stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St Mark's CofE Primary School is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.
- The school has undergone a number of significant changes of leadership and staffing over the past year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND attending this school is well above national average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also heard pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- As part of inspecting early years, inspectors met with the early years leader and made visits to the Reception classes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with governors, including the two joint chair of governors. They also met with the Head of Education, Standards and Achievement for Brighton and Hove and the school improvement partner. They also met with representative from the diocese of Chichester.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View and parents' written comments. An inspector also spoke to groups of parents on the morning of the second day of inspection.
- Inspectors also considered 11 hand written responses to the Ofsted parent view survey.

### **Inspection team**

Michelle Lower, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Hylands

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022