

Inspection of a good school: St Mark's CofE Primary School

Oxenholme Lane, Natland, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7QH

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 February 2023

Outcome

St Mark's CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at St Mark's Church of England Primary School. Governors' and leaders' values permeate through the school and are reflected in the positive attitudes of pupils. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They understand the importance of treating each other fairly and with kindness. Staff have warm and supportive relationships with pupils. Pupils know that adults in school will help them to resolve any concerns that they may have. Leaders deal with bullying quickly and stop it from happening again. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. These expectations are clearly understood by staff and pupils. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. They enjoy their learning and are enthused by the activities and experiences that their teachers provide. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Pupils value the opportunity to celebrate each other's positive actions. Pupils recognise values such as friendship, forgiveness and endurance in each other and nominate other pupils for an award. They explain how other pupils have demonstrated one of the values in practice and this is then celebrated by the school community. This helps pupils to build self-esteem and also helps them to become compassionate and empathetic members of society.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum from the early years to Year 6. They have deliberately constructed the curriculum so that pupils can make links between learning in different subjects. Leaders have chosen a wide range of trips, visits and projects to enhance the curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils should acquire and when. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, are successful in their learning. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders are reviewing the curriculum. This is because they have not broken down the

essential knowledge that pupils should learn into smaller steps of learning. In these subjects, pupils do not build their knowledge as successfully.

Pupils who may have additional needs are quickly identified. Leaders ensure that these pupils get the help that they need to access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively with their learning.

Leaders ensure that teachers are supported to teach the curriculum well. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They revisit prior learning effectively and ensure that pupils are secure in this before they move on to new learning. In most subjects, teachers identify pupils' errors and misconceptions quickly and address these swiftly. This helps pupils to achieve well. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not developed effective assessment strategies for teachers to check if pupils are learning and remembering the intended curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils read widely and often in and out of school. Pupils enjoy the regular opportunities that they have to read with younger pupils and also with the school guinea pigs. This has encouraged some reluctant readers to read more often and to develop a love of reading. Leaders have successfully introduced a new phonics curriculum from the beginning of the Reception Year. Pupils build phonics knowledge, over time, to become confident and fluent readers. The books that they read in school match their phonic knowledge. Those who need additional help with reading are supported effectively to catch up.

Pupils from the early years to Year 6 behave well. Some children enter the early years when they are two years old. They learn to follow established routines from a young age. Pupils are considerate of each other at breaktimes and move sensibly around the school. They are enthusiastic about their lessons and listen attentively to their teachers. This means that lessons are rarely disrupted by negative behaviour.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum extends beyond the academic. Leaders provide planned opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders ensure that many experiences are rooted in the local community. For example, pupils have raised money for a hospice by singing in a supermarket and have also contributed to a charity for expectant mothers. Pupils engage in village events such as a lantern festival. Leaders also introduce pupils to the work of a new artist every week in assembly. Pupils learn how artists express their own views, beliefs and opinions through art. This includes artwork about racism. These varied experiences help pupils to become responsible and respectful citizens.

Governors have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. The school is well led and managed. Governors receive the information that they need to hold leaders to account for the actions that they take to further improve the school. Most staff feel that leaders prioritise their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have provided staff with training to ensure that they can identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders also provide governors and staff with weekly safeguarding updates. These ensure that they have the most pertinent information to help them keep abreast of national and local safeguarding issues. Staff report any concerns that they may have immediately. Leaders keep detailed records of these concerns.

Leaders regularly share online safety information with parents and carers. This helps to keep pupils safe when they are online. Leaders work closely with other agencies to secure help for vulnerable pupils and families.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn how to administer first aid and how to be safe in and near water.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not broken down the important knowledge that pupils should acquire into smaller steps of learning. This means that teachers are not clear about the essential knowledge to teach and when to teach it. Leaders should identify the small blocks of knowledge that teachers must teach, and the order that they should teach it in, so that pupils can build knowledge in a logical way, over time.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not fully developed strategies to check that the intended curriculums help pupils to know more and remember more over time. This means that teachers do not know how well pupils are remembering their learning and whether pupils need further support. Leaders should ensure that staff are well equipped to check that pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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

Unique reference number	112325
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10204444
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tim Ward
Headteacher	Peter Barfoot
Website	www.stmarksschoolnatland.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school belongs to the Diocese of Carlisle. The most recent section 48 inspection was in March 2017.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. She also spoke with a range of staff.
- The inspector met with eight governors, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered responses from the staff and pupils to the Ofsted survey.
- The inspector examined a range of safeguarding documentation. She checked how leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are in place. The lead inspector checked records of staff's safeguarding training. She spoke to staff to check how well they understand safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, in lessons and around school. She also spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art and design. She met subject leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. The inspector spoke with pupils. She also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to trusted adults.

Inspection team

Sally Timmons, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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