

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

Aylesbury Road, Bromley, Kent BR2 0QR

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 March 2023

Outcome

St Mark's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mark's is a happy place where pupils are kept safe. One reason for this is because pupils are kind to one another. Bullying is rare and is taken seriously by staff. Pupils say that adults are supportive and care for them well. Parents and carers speak very highly of the school. They use words such as 'nurturing', 'excellent' and 'responsive' to describe it.

Staff have high ambitions for all pupils. They expect pupils to work hard and achieve well. Pupils rise to these high expectations. They have very positive attitudes towards learning, taking pride in their work and being keen to answer questions.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of leadership responsibilities in which they get involved, such as being house captains, reading ambassadors and worship monitors. Pupils also benefit from a range of visits that support their classroom learning; these happen right from early years.

St Mark's is an inclusive school. It celebrates its own faith as well as ensuring that pupils are taught about a range of different cultures and beliefs, many of which represent the heritage of pupils and their families. As a result, differences are acknowledged and celebrated.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the curriculum. They make sure that pupils study a broad range of subjects. Leaders never view the curriculum as a finished product. This has been particularly evident since the pandemic, with work undertaken to ensure that pupils catch up on learning that they have missed, for example in learning to play instruments in music.

Leaders prioritise reading. This includes supporting pupils who are new to learning English. Most pupils become fluent readers quickly. However, a lot of care is taken to make sure that right from Reception, weaker readers are given the help they need to keep up with their peers. Teachers read a range of fiction and non-fiction texts to pupils regularly. All the school's work combines to help pupils become confident readers. Pupils enjoy reading and see it as an important thing to do.

Teachers know what they want pupils to learn. They know how their teaching builds on what pupils have previously been taught. They have strong subject knowledge. They explain things to pupils clearly and confidently. Adults have a strong focus on teaching vocabulary. This helps pupils to remember important subject terms. For example, children in Reception eagerly put on their waterproofs and went out in the snow, where staff used activities that helped children to learn vocabulary about the weather.

Teachers consistently check that pupils have understood what they want them to learn before they move on with activities. For example, in science, pupils used their knowledge to carry out a fair test carefully. In music, older pupils were able to read musical notes accurately and play them on the glockenspiel. Pupils build up a lot of fluency in their use of mathematics. In early years, careful and precise teaching helps children to understand number bonds and to count confidently. Pupils in Year 3 know their times tables.

Leaders have created a culture in which there are consistently high standards of behaviour. Low-level disruption is very rare. Teachers can get on with the job of teaching.

Leaders make sure that staff know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are equally ambitious for what these pupils learn, adapting their teaching successfully when needed. Pupils are also supported by a range of additional support, for example with handwriting and communication. Overall, pupils with SEND achieve very well.

Before the pandemic, pupils consistently achieved well in their reading and mathematics tests at the end of Year 6. These strong outcomes were also evident last year, when tests resumed. Current pupils have built up a strong body of knowledge and skills in different subjects.

Pupils are taught about diversity. Staff deliver regular 'inspire' workshops, where pupils learn about people with different protected characteristics. Pupils are then given challenges to help them think about what they have learned. Year 5 pupils attend 'virtue afternoons' at a secondary school in the trust to access facilities such as multimedia. Clubs and activities include bell-ringing and writing the school newspaper. Leaders are right to be looking to widen their after-school offer as some clubs fill up quickly.

One member of staff summed up what it is like to work at St Mark's when they said, 'I am very grateful to work here.' This was echoed by the high proportion who completed Ofsted's staff survey. Words such as 'supportive' and 'flexible' were commonly used. Leaders, supported by the trust, put a great deal of importance on staff well-being in their decision-making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils well. They work with a range of external agencies to complement the support that they can offer to pupils and families from inside the school. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including looking after their physical and emotional well-being. Staff are trained well and take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Leaders are quick to respond to any reported concerns. They keep detailed records of their actions on their online system. Parents are confident that their children are well looked after.

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 predecessor school, also called St Mark's Church of England Primary School, to be good in March 2014.

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	141567
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10255465
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Giles Lambert
Headteacher	Chris Hollands
Website	www.st-marks.bromley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2017 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Rochester. It had its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character in June 2016.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior staff. The inspector also held separate meetings with the chief executive officer, members of the advisory committee and trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, science and music. During each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about pupils' learning. The inspector reviewed samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also spoke to leaders and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in other subjects, including history, art and mathematics.
- The inspector met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies and behaviour information. The inspector also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector also considered replies to Ofsted Parent View and to the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

His Majesty's 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023