

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

Danebury Road, Hatch Warren, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG22 4US

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 November 2023

Outcome

St Mark's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mark's is a vibrant, supportive and highly ambitious school for all pupils. The school's values of love, forgiveness, hope and faith permeate throughout. Pupils arrive with eagerness to learn and are supported by caring and dedicated staff. Throughout the school, there is a buzz and excitement brought about by engaging and well-planned learning. Consequently, pupils thrive.

Pupils feel safe and are happy. They know that if they need help, they can go to a trusted adult. Pupils value their educational trips and residential visits, linked to their learning in the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive highly skilled and effective support. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils behave brilliantly, and they are highly respectful of each other. They learn about the world around them through precise and well-planned activities. Pupils discover how to look after small animals on the school farm. They also develop their outdoor practical skills, including building shelters and learning about habitats in the on-site forest area.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The comment of one parent, which typifies the school, is: 'St Mark's is a wonderful school, and I feel incredibly lucky my son attends such a fantastic setting.'

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

The curriculum is highly ambitious for all, including pupils with SEND. Following a recent curriculum review, the school has made well-considered changes. The curriculum is sequenced carefully, building upon individual pupil's knowledge effectively. Detailed checks are made on how well pupils are learning in English and mathematics. However, assessment is less precise in other subjects.

Starting in the Reception Year, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and strive to do their best. They flourish because of the high level of care, clear boundaries and the nurturing environment they experience. Teachers select activities carefully that help pupils to remember essential knowledge. In mathematics, for instance, they learn about directions and positioning. They can carefully enter directions into a programmable robot, to move in different directions on a map. In history lessons, pupils' secure knowledge of World War II enables them to sequence events on a timeline correctly. Pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding by revisiting previously learned knowledge, so they can connect it to their new learning.

The teaching of early reading, including phonics, is a top priority in the school. There is an established and highly structured approach to how reading is taught. This is extremely successful. In the Reception Year, children are introduced to a wide variety of stories to help to extend their vocabulary. Throughout the school, reading is skilfully threaded through all curriculum areas. Pupils use their phonics knowledge with determination to sound out unfamiliar words. Those who need extra help with phonics are identified quickly and receive timely and appropriate support that helps them to catch up. The school's successful work leads to pupils reading widely, often and with confidence and precision.

Staff swiftly identify any additional needs that pupils have. They provide a range of well-considered and carefully planned support. Teachers carefully adapt their teaching and learning activities so pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers. The school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (The Bridge) successfully supports pupils with both their academic and wider development as part of the main school.

Pupils are supported well to develop beyond their academic learning. They learn about different family types and healthy relationships. Pupils are taught about the importance of aiming high and the need to be resilient. Career fairs give pupils an insight into a range of opportunities for the future. Pupils know how to stay healthy and active. Mental health ambassadors help to promote the importance of keeping mentally healthy. Pupils are taught how to keep safe when, for example, using the internet, when visiting parks and when using bridges in the locality. Pupils understand how to be valued citizens and how to help people in the community.

The school's 'agents of change' programme helps pupils to understand that their simple actions can make the world a better place. Activities include raising money for charities, writing to companies to encourage them to become more environmentally friendly, litter picking in the local area or simply giving someone a smile.

Governors understand and carry out their roles very effectively. They know the strengths and areas for the school to develop. Staff highly appreciate how leaders consider their well-being and workload. The caring and strong team approach ensures that pupils are the very centre of everything staff do.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not check how well pupils are learning the planned curriculum. They are not clear enough about precise gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, they do not know how well pupils are understanding the curriculum over time. The school needs to strengthen the current assessment procedures so that staff are more knowledgeable about the impact the curriculum is having on pupils' learning.

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 March 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	131450
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10287984
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	620
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Aidan Kinnell
Headteacher	Charles Applegate
Website	www.stmarksprimary.net
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision, called The Bridge, for pupils with SEND. Pupils are placed here by the local authority.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school currently uses two registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Winchester. The school's last section 48 inspection was carried out in July 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings and spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, the 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.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils during playtimes and in lessons.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, including parents' free-text comments, were considered. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. The pupil survey was available to the school, but there were no responses.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in the school, the inspectors spoke to members of staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding leads to discuss the school's policies and procedures. During these meetings, records were scrutinised, including those relating to the safer recruitment of staff.

Inspection team

Darren Aisthorpe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kate Magliocco

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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