

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

School Lane, Hadlow Down, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 4HY

Inspection dates:

27 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at this caring village school. They learn the importance of good behaviour and meet the high expectations of teachers through their sensible conduct. Pupils know the school's expectations of 'be ready, respectful and safe' well. They demonstrate this in their considerate play at breaktime and their calm and orderly behaviour in the corridors. Pupils know that teachers keep them safe and are confident in raising any concerns that they may have.

Pupils enjoy learning. They listen intently to teachers and concentrate well during lessons. Pupils work hard. However, teachers do not always teach pupils well enough or assess what they know sufficiently well. Expectations of pupils' achievement are not high enough. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

The school has prioritised opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of skills and qualities. Pupils are aspirational about the possibilities regarding future careers. For instance, a group of pupils interested in engineering designed a model for a solar-powered filtration system and presented their ideas to a panel of professional judges. Pupils are proud to act as role models to younger pupils.

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

The school has recently introduced a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have designed this to ensure that pupils learn important information and skills across all subjects. However, the new curriculum is not yet fully embedded in all areas. Some teachers have not yet developed strong enough subject knowledge in some areas. As a result, teachers' activities do not always enable pupils to build quickly on their prior knowledge and deepen their understanding securely.

The school identifies the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), effectively. Pupils with SEND have clear plans to enable them to access the curriculum alongside their peers. They are provided with adaptations to the curriculum that support their needs, such as standing desks or short learning breaks that settle them quickly and enable them to concentrate.

Teachers explain learning clearly and model the use of language and vocabulary well. For example, in Reception Year, teachers use well-chosen language to help children to plan routes for robots and understand left and right. The school uses a range of assessments to plan next steps and support for those pupils who fall behind in their learning, but this is not always effective. For example, some teachers do not always check pupils' understanding carefully enough. As a result, pupils do not learn important knowledge accurately, and pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Younger pupils learn to read fluently and confidently, but some older pupils do not. The school uses a well-designed phonics scheme, and in Reception, they quickly learn the sounds and letters that they need to know. Pupils enjoy reading and benefit from a wide range of stories, poems and non-fiction books. However, support for older, weaker readers is less effective. Consequently, older pupils do not improve their fluency as well as they could.

Pupils behave well and are courteous. They know the school's rules and take high levels of responsibility for their own behaviour. Classrooms are lively and purposeful environments. Pupils attend frequently and work hard to win rewards for their class. The school analyses trends in attendance effectively and provides additional support for pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

The school has prioritised the personal development of pupils. They learn how to keep safe online and in the local community. The school enriches the curriculum with a wide range of trips and visits. For example, Year 5/6 pupils visit a chocolate workshop as part of their learning on the Mayans, and Year 3/4 pupils visit a Roman villa to learn about life in Roman Britain. Pupils have a rich offer of clubs to develop their skills and interests, and frequent opportunities to demonstrate their talents. Pupils sing at a local opera house and regularly perform music at the local church.

Leaders have recognised that new approaches to school improvement have been required. Several of these have been successful, but others are currently being embedded. The school's approach to well-being helps staff to manage their workload. As a result, staff feel well supported. Governors are well informed and have supported leaders in managing the extensive changes that the school is undertaking effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed and introduced an ambitious and broad curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. However, this has not been fully embedded. Staff are not delivering the curriculum consistently well or ensuring that assessment approaches are fully effective. As a result, pupils are not learning all the important facts and skills they should. Leaders must ensure they continue the work they have started to ensure that the curriculum is delivered consistently well so that pupils learn all the important knowledge and skills identified in the curriculum.
- Leaders have not ensured that support for older readers who struggle with reading is effective enough. This means that they do not improve their fluency as securely as they could. Leaders should ensure that older readers are supported well in improving their reading.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 10–11 July 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	114552
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10296195
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Smyth
Headteacher	Claire Roberts (Interim headteacher)
Website	https://st-marks-hadlowdown.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Mark's Church of England Primary School is a Church of England voluntary-aided school. The school's most recent section 48 statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools took place in October 2019. The next section 48 inspection should take place before December 2024.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provides breakfast and after school clubs for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher. The inspectors met with other leaders and staff. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority and diocese.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrea Harris

Ofsted Inspector

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