

Inspection of St Mark's Primary School

St Mark's Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2LF

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 December 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending this warm and welcoming school. From the moment that children arrive in Nursery, they receive excellent care and support. The school motto 'committed to excellence' applies to every pupil. The high number of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) know that staff will go the 'extra mile' for them to help them achieve.

The school values of empathy, respect and aspiration are clearly demonstrated in the day-to-day life of the school. Working relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally positive. An atmosphere of kindness pervades the school. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe.

The school has the very highest expectations of all pupils. For example, to promote aspiration, pupils in Year 6 visit the University of Cambridge. All pupils are encouraged to think about their aims for the future through the weekly careers assembly. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve exceptionally well in national tests in English and mathematics.

Pupils' wider development is a big priority. Pupils attend many trips relating to the topics that they are learning in class. They participate in clubs including crochet, computing, gardening and sport. From the early years onwards, children benefit from the school's 'life skills' curriculum. Here, they develop key skills, including learning to tie their shoelaces or ride a bike.

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

The school successfully prioritises the development of communication and language from the very start of Nursery, including, for example, through well-chosen songs, rhymes and stories. This especially supports the many children who start school who are not as far forward in their language development as the school expects. Children learn to read from the start of Reception. As a result of the expertly taught phonics programme, they learn to sound out and blend the words that they are reading with increasing confidence. Those pupils who struggle to keep up are identified quickly through regular assessments. They receive helpful additional support that enables them to catch up. As a result, by the end of Year 1, the vast majority of pupils can read to a good standard.

The school's curriculum design is firmly rooted in credible evidence and research. The school has worked hard to create a broad, engaging and ambitious wider curriculum. The key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils must learn is carefully chosen and sequenced. For example, pupils study volcanoes in geography before they read 'Escape from Pompeii' in English. This both reinforces pupils' learning and allows pupils to focus on the language in the English text. In history, pupils in Year 6 learn about the changing role of women. This enables them to study continuity and change through time, as well as understand key aspects of equality and inclusion.

Pupils discuss their learning in lessons with enthusiasm, for example, through the regular 'talk tasks'. As a result of high-quality professional development, teachers demonstrate a strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. They check all pupils' learning carefully, including, for instance, through quizzes at the start and end of each unit, as well as through end-of-year assessments. Pupils with SEND are identified quickly and supported extensively. Where necessary, tasks are adapted to ensure that these pupils can access the learning at their correct level. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve very highly, particularly in English and mathematics.

The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. Children in the early years cooperate with each other, take turns and focus well on what they are doing. Older pupils demonstrate great enthusiasm for their learning. Lessons proceed without disruption. Pupils learn how to understand and regulate their emotions. This helps them to have more control over their behaviour. The school works effectively to address pupils' absence. As a result, the attendance of pupils has increased recently and is now high.

The school's work to support pupils' wider development and character is exceptional. All pupils in Year 6 take on positions of responsibility. These include well-being champions, reading ambassadors, school councillors and peer mediators. Older female pupils engage in a 'rights for girls' programme. Older male pupils were able to talk knowledgeably about consent and misogyny. Pupils engage in charity work supporting a school in Africa, a local food bank and the residents of a local care home. Pupils also take part in local community projects. These include designing a nearby nature trail and monitoring the levels of air pollution outside the school.

Staff are hugely positive about working at the school. They appreciate leaders' concern for their well-being and the efforts made to reduce their workload. Governors know the school well and contribute productively to its ongoing improvement. Parents and carers value the way the school goes above and beyond to support them, for example, with housing issues and local services. Parents, staff and pupils are all rightly proud to be part of this wonderful 'family' school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	102645
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10345830
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Diana Coman
Headteacher	Ania Kennedy
Website	www.stmarks.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the school senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for school staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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