

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARKS CE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Salisbury

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126364

Headteacher: John Foster

Reporting inspector: Jill Head
2430

Dates of inspection: 27th – 29th June 2000

Inspection number: 188594

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior
School category: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils: 7 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Somerset Road
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Wiltshire

Postcode: SP1 3BL

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Peter Chalke

Date of previous inspection: 24th June 1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mark's School, takes children from ages 7 to 11, and there are currently 435 pupils on roll. Almost all the children transfer from Wyndham Park Infant School, which shares the same site. Pupils come mainly from owner occupied homes but a minority comes from a large housing estate where there is some social disadvantage. Overall, however, the area is relatively prosperous; a high percentage of adults have received higher education, and few families are affected by overcrowded homes. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. 1% of pupils come from ethnic minority families. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs has doubled in recent years, but is broadly average. On entry to the school, most pupils have skills in literacy and numeracy that are above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mark's is an effective school. The teaching is mainly good or better. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, senior management and governors. The costs per pupil are average. Pupils enter the school having attained above average standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 1. They maintain these high standards in the tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Therefore the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school achieves high standards in English and in science.
- The school is well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching is mainly good and is otherwise satisfactory.
- The school places a high priority on the pastoral care of pupils and is a safe and caring community.
- Pupils behave very well, have very good work habits and positive attitudes.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics are lower than those in English and science, and not as high as those achieved by pupils in similar schools.
- Standards in information technology are affected by the lack of opportunity for pupils to learn about control technology.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in addressing most of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection in June 1996. The high standards of behaviour and the positive ethos of the school have been maintained. The behaviour policy has been reviewed and updated. A school's council has been introduced and, through this, pupils are able to discuss any concerns about behaviour.

An effective programme for the monitoring of teaching is now established and the quality of teaching has improved. Although there is variation in the quality of teaching, there is greater consistency than was evident in the last inspection, when the teaching in 15% of all lessons was unsatisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed in this inspection.

Better continuity and progression in the planning and teaching of subjects has been achieved by developing schemes of work and adopting some published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Planning for English and mathematics, based on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, provides good progression in these subjects.

The subject co-ordinators have attended courses on the leadership and management of their subject. They now have their own budget; and some have benefitted from time to develop their subject, with the intention that all will have this opportunity. As a consequence of these improvements, co-ordinators are now in a better position to provide support and guidance to colleagues.

Procedures for identifying the learning needs of all children, especially high or low attainers, have been improved. Regular testing is carried out in English, mathematics and science and teachers keep careful records of pupils' progress. For the last two years, pupils have been grouped by ability for mathematics. Key Stage 1 SATs results are used to identify pupils requiring extra help in English. However, there is scope for further refining teachers' skills in assessing pupils' writing. The results of the 1999 mathematics SATs have not been analysed with sufficient rigour to provide the school with useful information regarding the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills and understanding at the end of the key stage. The school has begun to set targets for individual pupils and to track their progress, and is in a good position to make further progress in this area.

Standards in English have improved and the school has maintained its high standards in science. The school has taken steps this year to improve standards in mathematics. The numeracy strategy is now in place and the ability grouping is having a beneficial effect. The provision for information technology still has some of the gaps in resources identified in the last inspection and this affects pupils' standards. A computer suite is shortly to be opened and this should ensure all the national curriculum requirements are met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	A	A	B
mathematics	A	B	B	D
science	A	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

During the last three years 11 year old pupils have attained good results in English, mathematics and science in relation to all schools nationally. In English and science, the 1999 results are high when compared with similar schools. However, pupils' 1999 results in mathematics are slightly lower than those for pupils in similar schools. Starting from standards that were above average in 1996, the school's results have risen year by year in line with the national trend. The work pupils were doing during the inspection confirms these standards. The school is exceeding the targets for improvement, which are rather conservative and could be more challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and have very good work habits.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour, in and out of the classroom, matches the high expectations their teachers have of them and is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils enjoy good relations with their teachers and with each other.
Attendance	Good, above the national average.

Pupils are enthusiastic about what they learn, and work and play very well together. They are friendly, courteous, helpful and polite. They are self-disciplined and can be trusted to work independent of direct supervision, showing responsible and mature attitudes in their daily life in school. Their personal growth and understanding is well nurtured and they thrive in the school's strong moral ethos. They respond well to the opportunities given for them to show care for others and to respect differences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	N/A	N/A	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Overall, the teaching in the school is good. In 55% of the lessons seen, the teaching was good or better, with 17% being very good and 11% excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The teaching of literacy is good. Teachers are fully implementing the strategy and their subject knowledge is generally good. They provide a good range of activities and interesting texts and present the subject in a lively and stimulating manner, usually successfully meeting the needs of all pupils. Pupils are set by ability for numeracy, which helps teachers match their lessons well to the abilities of the groups. Teachers have fully implemented the three-part numeracy lesson and are striving to raise standards in mathematics. Across the school, teaching in the best lessons is lively and enthusiastic: lessons are well planned to ensure appropriate challenges for all pupils; and time passes very quickly as pupils engage and become actively involved in their learning through interesting activities. However, the pace of learning is too slow in some lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and well balanced. However, the school provides only a limited range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, the provision for these pupils is good. The use of Additional Literacy Support materials has been successful and pupils engaged in this work make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is enriched by the school's strong Christian values that underpin all aspects of the school's work. Good provision is made for pupils' social, moral and cultural development and the school makes a sound contribution to their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a particular strength of the school.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) who are withdrawn for extra help for English, receive good teaching from the education support assistants working with them. Most pupils are also well catered for in class lessons. However, pupils not withdrawn are occasionally given work that does not take sufficient account of their specific needs. The setting in mathematics means that SEN pupils are appropriately catered for in lessons. The school is a very caring community where each child feels valued. Adults know the pupils well and relationships are based on respect and encouragement. Parents and their children feel confident about talking to teachers and sharing concerns. Safety, both in and out of school, is effectively addressed. A programme of road safety is run in conjunction with the school encouraging pupils to walk to school, using the school 'walking bus'.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He is ably supported by the senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body makes a valuable contribution to the leadership and management of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is rigorous monitoring of teaching, well supported by the school's appraisal scheme. Regular assessments and testing give the school a clear picture of standards. In striving to improve, the school takes appropriate steps to overcome identified weaknesses. However, closer attention should be given to the mathematics SATs results, in order to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school has clear priorities and spending is carefully targeted. All resources are used well and the principles of best value are adhered to.

The school is very effectively led and managed by the headteacher. He knows his school well and has a clear sense of direction. This is shared by the staff, who form an effective team in working towards the school's goals. The headteacher is well supported by the senior management team. Governors are well informed, take a keen interest and provide good support to the leadership and management of the school. The school is good at analysing strengths and weaknesses. This includes an annual survey of Year 6 parents' views of the school. Resources are used effectively and for the benefit of the pupils. Principles of best value are adhered to in appointments and in spending for resources or improvements to premises.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • The staff are easy to talk to. • The school expects children to work hard and do their best. • The school is helping children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set. • A greater range of extra curricular activities. • More information on their child's progress.

Inspection findings fully support parents' positive views of the school. Although the school provides some extra curricular activities, it accepts that there is scope for a greater range to be provided. Evidence shows that the school is generally setting the amounts of homework as specified in its homework policy, which are consistent with government guidelines. The school provides the normal range of opportunities for parents to discuss how their child is progressing and the annual written reports are detailed and informative.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards in English and in science are high

1. Examples of high standards in English are evident, throughout the school. Every day, in every class, pupils can be seen reading. They readily discuss the books they like, showing a growing understanding of how writers develop plots and characters. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils have read widely from a range of authors. They can explain cogently why they like certain types of books or authors; and their tastes go well beyond the universal favourite characters such as Harry Potter, or authors Enid Blyton or Roald Dahl. Not surprisingly, the standards they achieve in reading are well above average. Pupils' writing shows a wide range of styles and they are given ample opportunities to read, write and talk across the curriculum. For example, some Year 3 pupils, imagine they are Roman soldiers and write convincing letters home from their post at Hadrian's Wall. In a display of work about Stephen Hawkins, pupils write movingly about their feelings when they hear a recording of him speak. In another display, linked to work in geography, pupils write their views on a proposed Salisbury by-pass following a class discussion. All pupils make at least sound progress in writing and, although the standards in writing are not as high as those achieved in reading, some more able pupils reach very high standards for their ages.
2. Science was not inspected in the same depth as English. However, from the evidence available, inspection findings confirm the good standards achieved in the SATs results.

The quality of teaching is mainly good and is otherwise satisfactory.

3. In the best lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching shines through. The presentation is lively and pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Perceptive and probing questions are used to extend pupils' thinking and enable them to take risks, knowing that their contributions will be valued and that any mistakes will be regarded as part of the learning process. This is very well illustrated in a mathematics lesson, where the mistakes pupils make in interpreting and constructing pie charts, are used by the teacher to illustrate her teaching points. In these good lessons, pupils are excited by the challenge of the work and are eager to do well. No time is wasted as the teacher and the class share their zest for learning. The organisation of the lessons remains focussed on the learning objectives, and questions and activities are carefully matched to provide the right intellectual challenge for all pupils. Much of pupils' learning is reinforced through opportunities to discuss their work with others. In an English lesson, pupils are reminded how to be good 'response partners' when improving the first draft of their poems, in pairs. By the end of the lesson, pupils have improved their poems and can say why they feel their poem is better. The feedback from the teacher is also valuable. Their successes are celebrated and they are shown how they can improve. In lessons like these, time passes quickly and the productivity of learning is impressive. At the start of another lesson, the teacher reminds pupils to look at their individual targets and encourages them to describe their own strategies for working out doubling or halving of large numbers. Although the routes some children take are rather complicated, their contributions are received without any judgmental comments.

The school is well led and managed.

4. The headteacher leads the school with a strong vision and sense of purpose. He is held in high regard by staff, parents and governors. He has good analytical and interpersonal skills. He regularly monitors teaching and learning, and has a very clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses. He has developed a strong team of teachers and support staff, all of whom have a firm stake in the educational direction of the school and its continuing improvement. The upper and lower school co-ordinators provide good support in the day-to-day management of the school, taking responsibility for some assemblies and behaviour issues. They have undertaken training for the monitoring of teaching and now have a regular monitoring commitment. Through the high quality of their own teaching, they provide good models for others. Both co-ordinators and the head feel justly pleased with the increased collaboration of staff who now plan and work together effectively, with the valuable support of the year group leaders and subject co-ordinators.
5. The governing body has an open and professional relationship with the head and staff. Governors are kept well informed of the school's activities and initiatives through presentations by subject co-ordinators and the headteacher's reports. They take a keen interest in the school and are committed to carrying out their responsibilities thoroughly. The literacy and numeracy governors have observed lessons and the SEN governor meets regularly with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and attends some reviews. The governors feel there is a common vision across the school and, as one governor said *'a real desire for each child to reach his, or her potential.'*

Pupils behave very well, have very good work habits and positive attitudes

6. The behaviour of pupils across the school is very good. A calm orderly atmosphere prevails in the school, and pupils, who are friendly, courteous and polite, show respect and consideration to adults and one another. Pupils respond positively to the school rules and class codes of conduct. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and trust them. They are given opportunities to continue work in classrooms or use the library during the midday break. Pupils work hard and are prepared to put considerable effort into the presentation of their work. They listen well and always respond quickly to instructions with the minimum of fuss. This is particularly evident when coming in from playtimes and settling immediately into lessons. These very prompt responses mean that very little time is wasted and so more work is done. Group activities run smoothly whether directly managed by the teacher or managed independently by the pupils. Pupils of all ages carry out classroom duties willingly and reliably and those in Year 6 enjoy the opportunity to be 'prefect for the day'. Pupils have a sense of community and value the opportunity to contribute to it by making positive and sensible suggestions for improvements through the School Council.

The school places a high priority on the pastoral care of pupils and is a safe and caring community

7. The school provides good pastoral care for pupils. All the school staff know the pupils well and treat them with respect. Parents are encouraged to share concerns with staff and there are well established procedures to ensure that all adults in the school are appropriately briefed on how best to support pupils. Pupils know that they will be listened to if they raise matters of concern and that the school will take effective action

to deal with the isolated instances of bullying. The School Council's suggestions to improve aspects of school life are well received and acted on. This openness helps pupils feel secure and confident and makes a positive contribution to their personal development. The buddy system, where Year 6 pupils are paired with Year 3, is appreciated by parents and their children. This, together with the meeting the head has individually with each child shortly after joining the school, helps ease the transition from the infant school. The high expectations of the staff for good behaviour and consideration for others, ensures a very orderly and disciplined school. Pupils move calmly round the school. They are patient and courteous and take care of each other. The school pays particular attention to encouraging children to travel to school safely by organising cycling proficiency, preparing maps to show safe walking routes and providing safety equipment for use by the 'walking bus'. This not only makes a contribution towards improving pupils' fitness but also fosters a sense of independence and confidence in pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in mathematics are lower than those achieved in English and science, and not as high as those achieved by pupils in similar schools.

8. Since 1998, pupils' attainment in mathematics, in comparison with all schools, has been above the national average, but not as high as their attainment in English and in science. The school's 1999 results in mathematics were a little below the average for similar schools. The weaknesses lie in some less effective teaching, and a lack of focus on those areas of mathematics where pupils failed in the 1999 tests
9. In some lessons, teachers do not maintain a brisk pace during the introduction and, as a consequence, opportunities to rehearse and sharpen skills are lost. Where pupils are required to listen for long periods without being able to make decisions, to demonstrate or to explain their thinking, their concentration wanes. In some lessons, the teacher does too much talking, giving little opportunity for pupils to articulate their thinking. When no clear time limits are set for pupils to complete their tasks, some pupils work at a desultory pace and achieve less than they should. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching in the plenary sessions. Although some are very good, in other lessons, the plenary does little to reinforce the main teaching points.
10. The results of the Year 6 statutory assessments in 1999 have not been analysed with sufficient rigour to enable the school to judge the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills and understanding at the end of the key stage, or to use this information to address weaknesses.

Standards in information and control technology are affected by the lack of opportunity to learn about control technology

11. The school is aware that it does not meet the full requirements of the National Curriculum in ICT, particularly in relation to controlling, monitoring and modelling. Inspection evidence also suggests that, although pupils gain some experience of using drawing programs and of importing graphics into texts, this use of ICT is less well developed across the key stage. For example some older pupils have difficulty in creating graphs from data they have gathered in geography. By the end of the key stage, pupils' skills in control, monitoring and modelling are low for their ages. Although

some good opportunities for using information and control technology across the curriculum were observed during the inspection, there are many missed opportunities when computers or other technology could be used to support other subjects and consolidate ICT skills.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve pupils' standards and achievements further, the school should include in its post inspection plan the following issues:

Improve the standards which pupils achieve, in mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 2 by:

- ensuring that a brisk pace is maintained during the oral/mental activities which form the introduction to numeracy lessons;
- monitoring numeracy lessons to check that pupils are involved interactively, through the use of carefully planned questioning by teachers, during the whole class main activity;
- setting clear time scales and expectations for the tasks to be undertaken in group work so that no time is wasted;
- sharing the good practice which exists in the school to achieve greater consistency in the quality of plenary sessions;
- analysing the results of the Year 6 statutory tests with sufficient rigour to enable the school to judge the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' mathematical skills and understanding at the end of the key stage.

Improve the provision for ICT by:

- ensuring that all pupils have regular time-tabled access to the new computer suite;
- supporting teachers in the use of the suite through a programme of well focussed in-service training;
- providing opportunities for all pupils to have appropriate experience of controlling, monitoring and modelling;
- maximising the use of information and control technology across the curriculum by planning activities that make better use of classroom computers and other equipment;
- continuing to collect samples of computer generated work from all year groups and checking these for progression in the development of ICT skills as well as coverage of the scheme of work.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	3	5	8	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	435
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	32
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	83
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	58	43	101

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	51	41	54
	Girls	40	31	42
	Total	91	72	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (91)	71 (72)	95 (96)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (72)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	40	47	48
	Girls	34	33	42
	Total	74	80	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (71)	79 (63)	89 (71)
	National	68 (65)	69 (66)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	433
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.9
Average class size	31.07

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	102.65

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	663,435
Total expenditure	650,426
Expenditure per pupil	1,534
Balance brought forward from previous year	70,973
Balance carried forward to next year	83,682

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	435
Number of questionnaires returned	157

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	52	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	27	62	9	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	61	4	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	55	24	1	1
The teaching is good.	39	54	4	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	54	17	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	45	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	33	54	10	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	64	31	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	52	3	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	47	24	3	4