



# St Mark's Catholic School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 102543  
**LEA** Hounslow LEA  
**Inspection number** 276732  
**Inspection dates** 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Paul Dowgill

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	106 Bath Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Hounslow
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		TW3 3EJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02085773600
<b>Number on roll</b>	1207	<b>Fax number</b>	02085770559
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Kerry Sullivan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Enright

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	276732

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Mark's is a popular, over-subscribed, mixed, voluntary-aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18. There are over 1200 pupils on roll, of whom about 260 are in the sixth form, drawn from a wide area. The sixth form is part of a Catholic consortium with two other schools in Hounslow. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils is very high with many ethnic groups represented. Around one-fifth of pupils' have a first language other than English. Many pupils enter the school at the age of eleven with knowledge and understanding that are above the levels expected nationally for this group. The number of pupils with identified learning difficulties is below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low, as is pupil mobility. The school gained Technology College specialist status in 1999 and recently had this renewed and it also has Investors In People status. It is a partner in the local Excellence in Cities initiative and Education Business Partnership.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

St Mark's is a good school and inspectors agree with the senior leaders that it has many strong features. The school's vision emphasises that 'each person is called to serve God and their neighbour and to fulfil their potential' and so places a high priority on pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils enjoy being at St Mark's: they want to succeed and they are proud of their achievements. There is an outstanding curriculum and programme of extra curricular activities which provide pupils with many opportunities to excel. Overall, the standards pupils achieve in external examinations are high. They make exceptional progress between Year 7 and GCSE. However, the school needs to improve the progress pupils make between starting school and the end of Year 9. Excellent provision is made to support and guide pupils, resulting in their outstanding personal development. There is a very caring ethos and the behaviour of pupils is exemplary. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and senior leadership team know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. Inspection findings confirmed most of the judgements the school had made about itself. There is, however, some inconsistency in how middle managers implement their role in improving pupils' performance. Specialist status has helped the school make improvements to the quality of teaching and broaden its links with partners in the local community. There is a good focus on the specialist status in school with a technology week and after-school engineering club. Examination results in technology itself have improved considerably in recent years. There are many very effective working partnerships with a broad range of external agencies, for example the Diocese and Learning and Skills Council. Outreach work with feeder schools has helped teachers share their expertise and develop their own understanding. The school provides good value for money. Since the last inspection, the school has made many improvements but still needs to focus on matching the work that teachers set for pupils more closely to their abilities. Its capacity to make further improvements is good.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

St Mark's sixth form is popular with students and the staying on rate from Year 11 is high. All students have the right to join the sixth form and there is an excellent range of courses. Students' progress is good and they achieve high standards. Teaching is good overall but there are not enough opportunities for students to learn independently. Students are well cared for and are given good opportunities to take responsibility, such as helping younger pupils with their work. Their personal development is outstanding. The leadership of the sixth form is good and recent appointments have helped strengthen this. The capacity for improvement is excellent.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

To build on its successes the school should:

\* Ensure that the work set for pupils in Years 7 - 9 is well matched to their abilities and effectively challenges them to meet demanding targets.

\* Further develop the role of middle managers in ensuring consistency in improving pupils' performance and progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' attainment on starting the school is consistently above national expectations for their age. Overall, they achieve high standards but the progress they make in their learning is uneven across the school. Most pupils with learning difficulties make good progress between Years 7 and 11. A very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds progress less rapidly.

In the last two years, although pupils achieved high, and sometimes exceptional, standards at the end of Year 9, they have not all made the progress they should have, particularly in mathematics. The school is very aware of this and has put in place a broad range of effective strategies. Pupils are now being set far more challenging targets, resulting in improved progress, and these are monitored closely and regularly reviewed. Pupils are aware of the levels at which they are working, their targets and what they have to do to achieve these. In lessons, inspectors saw many examples of learning where pupils were making good progress and being challenged to extend their understanding. Pupils' written work also clearly shows that what they are learning now builds effectively on previous work and is making greater demands of them.

In 2005, the results of pupils in Year 11 were exceptionally high, as was the case in previous years. Over Years 10 and 11, pupils make excellent progress, meeting and often exceeding the challenging targets set by the school. Standards are outstanding in many subjects with pupils performing particularly well in English and mathematics compared with national averages.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They enjoy coming to school and demonstrate this through their high and improving levels of attendance and punctuality. Pupils' relationships with their peers, teachers and other adults are very good and reflect the school's commitment to responsibility to others and racial harmony. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and the number of exclusions is very low. Pupils report that any bullying is effectively dealt with and they feel safe at St Mark's. In all Years pupils are given good advice on a wide range of health issues and they understand the benefits of following a healthy lifestyle. Good numbers attend extra-curricular activities which focus on developing personal fitness. The range of healthy foods available in the school canteen has increased and pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and drink water. They make an outstanding contribution to the community, and they demonstrate responsibility through an effective school council, which is well regarded by other pupils and represents their views. Pupils take

fundraising at school fairs and charity events very seriously and help raise considerable sums of money for good causes, both at home and abroad. Older pupils have a good understanding of career options and what is required of them if they are to achieve success in the workplace. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is reflected in the way they act towards others and their perspective on broader issues facing society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning overall are good. In the most effective lessons, teachers set high standards and sustain pupils' interest with varied tasks that are appropriately challenging. These teachers show great enthusiasm for their subjects. They ask well-chosen questions to help pupils deepen their understanding and apply what they have learned to different situations. Good pace is a key feature of these lessons, with teachers checking carefully that pupils have grasped new ideas before moving on. This was done to very good effect in a mathematics lesson, where both teacher and inspector could see pupils' eyes light up with understanding, leading to the teacher to move quickly on to more challenging work. Often where learning was most effective pupils worked collaboratively and teachers circulated to offer well-judged advice.

Less successful teaching did not address fully the needs of pupils of different abilities. In particular, in these lessons, there was limited use of extension activities to challenge the most able pupils. Pupils would also benefit from increased opportunities to work independently and evaluate their own learning. As one pupil said, "When we get to be more involved, we learn better".

Most pupils have an understanding of how well they are doing, but the use of assessment information to inform the next learning steps and to set targets is not yet consistent. There is, however, some excellent practice in the school that could be shared so that learning is maximised in all areas.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum the school provides is outstanding and it meets very effectively the needs of individual pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school regularly reviews the curriculum to meet individual and local needs. In Years 10 and 11, the choice of subjects has increased since the last inspection and now includes vocational courses at a local college. Good opportunities are provided for work-related learning. In Years 7 to 9 the school has recently introduced a range of initiatives to improve literacy across the curriculum. Those pupils identified as having particular talents are provided with very good opportunities to develop them outside lessons. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment activities,

including sports, arts and vocational activities. These have very high levels of participation and are appreciated by pupils. A wide variety of visits provide excellent opportunities for students to develop their cultural awareness as well as extending their understanding of the curriculum. The school's specialist status has helped in developing the use of a wide range of technology. Recent developments in information technology are having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are outstanding and have a significant impact on their development and well being. Pupils and parents have a real sense that the school cares for the young people and wants them to achieve the best they can. There is a wide range of pastoral support for pupils with form tutors playing a very effective role in this. Further guidance is available through the school's Chaplain and Catholic Children's Society counsellor. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language have excellent support resulting in their good progress by the end of Year 11. Procedures for child protection, health and safety and first aid are implemented very effectively. The school provides excellent academic support through its arrangements for setting individual targets for each pupil. Form tutors play a key role in this and pupils value the one-to-one discussions. Pupils also appreciate the support provided through the school's mentoring programmes. Pupils in Year 7 and the sixth form have very effective induction which helps them to settle quickly. Very good guidance is provided to help pupils choose examination subjects that match their interests and aptitudes. They are supported well in preparation for studies beyond school and for future employment.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and senior leadership team work very effectively together to provide good leadership and management of the school. There is an emphasis on maintaining the caring and friendly atmosphere so valued by staff and pupils, but not at the expense of academic performance. The senior leaders promote equal opportunities and harmony strongly, in keeping with the school's vision. Senior staff play a full role in evaluating the performance of the school through the review of a broad range of its work. Where appropriate they work very effectively with external agencies, such as the local authority, to achieve this. Senior leaders have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring is detailed and systematic and provides the school with considerable information about its performance. However, there is inconsistency amongst middle managers in the degree to which they use this evidence effectively in the development of successful strategies to improve learning. Where practice is best, subject and year leaders have very clear plans as to what steps need to be taken to improve pupils' performance and how this can be achieved.

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The school has developed and maintained many links with external partners, particularly in the locality. It works effectively with two other Catholic schools to provide a sixth form consortium and is active in other partnerships, such as the local Education Business Partnership. The school takes good advantage of opportunities to gain external financial support and has recently secured funding to build an audio-visual block. Pupils benefit from very good resources, such as the interactive whiteboards installed in many classrooms. Financial management is very good and, given the achievements of the pupils, overall the school provides good value for money.

Many governors have had a close and extended connection with the school, resulting in a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The governing body effectively carries out all of its statutory duties. It provides good, well-founded support for the headteacher and school, but on occasions does not challenge aspects of the school's performance rigorously enough.





## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

### **Pupils**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of St Mark's. We spoke to a number of you in small groups and many more in lessons, as well as looking at your work and reading the responses from some of your parents. We listened to what you had to say about St Mark's and quote one of you in the report. You probably know by now that we judged your school to be good with some very strong features. We think your school is well led and managed and that the staff want you all to fulfil your potential. We were impressed by your enthusiasm and agree with you that St Mark's is a harmonious and safe school. The curriculum and extra curricular activities provided by the school give you many opportunities to excel - something which many of you do across a range of areas and not just in examinations. We thought the care and guidance offered by the staff was excellent and really helped you develop the positive attitudes you demonstrated during the inspection. Your behaviour during our visit was exemplary and we also saw very good levels of attendance and punctuality. The seriousness with which you see the school council, your contributions to school life and charity work were all very impressive.

During our visit we came in to a number of lessons and saw much good teaching and learning. The relationships between the teachers and you were all very positive and this helps you make progress. Your examination results, especially at the end of Year 11 are very good indeed.

We have suggested to the school that it considers how best to set work that challenges you to reach and, where possible, exceed the targets you are being set by the school. You can help in this by continuing to work hard and showing the enthusiasm for your own learning that we saw during the inspection. We hope you all enjoy the rest of your time at St Mark's and wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill

Her Majesty's Inspector