



Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106452
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 277565
Inspection dates 27 September 2005 to 28 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Ian Thompson CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Alexandra Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Wigan
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Lancashire WN5 9DS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 748618
Number on roll	188	Fax number	01942 748619
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Ashcroft
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr G Robinson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mark's Primary is a smaller than average, voluntary aided Church of England school. It is situated in an urban area of Wigan. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds with very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and only three are at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' standards are very low on joining the school and the balance of higher and lower attainers varies considerably from year to year. Currently almost 30% of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities, although the proportion with statements of special educational needs is below average. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is higher than average.

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 provides a good education for its pupils and offers good value for money. Pupils in the reception class make rapid progress but most do not reach the early learning goals before moving into the main school.

The school's evaluation of its work is mostly accurate. However, the use of available information is not as sharply focused as it should be on the detail of improvements needed and the steps necessary to secure them. Monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders is not yet rigorous enough to support target setting for both teachers and pupils. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. This progress is due to good teaching and effective arrangements for pupils' transition from one stage to the next. Pupils' personal development is outstandingly good because of the school's strong supportive ethos and the common approach by teachers to establishing expected standards. The school is a safe and friendly place so that pupils are happy to be there. This is reflected in their improving attendance and enjoyment of learning.

The school's managers rightly judge the overall effectiveness of the school to be good. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and has a good capacity to continue its improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

Consolidate the improvement made in recent years and:

- Ensure development planning pays closer attention to the specific details of what needs doing to improve and how it will be evaluated.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders in evaluating teaching and learning .

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Reception children make good progress. Those who have recently started have settled into the school quickly and are already making good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Pupils throughout the school cooperate and work well together. They make good progress through the school and by Year 6 standards are close to average.

The school's results in national tests for seven and eleven year olds have been improving over recent years with the exception of 2005 when a combination of staffing difficulties and changes in the attainment profile of the year group led to a sharp fall in overall results for Year 6. The majority of pupils who had been in the school continuously from Year 1 did as well as might be expected and many achieved well. Inspection evidence shows that the school's actions to improve standards are already having a positive effect so that it is on course to meet its challenging targets. The school has succeeded in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' performance and there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, including those

with additional learning difficulties or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. The school has resolved the issues concerning standards in English, science, history and geography identified in the previous report. In particular, although difficulties persist for many pupils, standards of writing have improved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school modestly evaluated this aspect as good but inspectors find that very strong relationships at all levels lead to a very positive ethos. Consistently good provision leads to pupils' outstanding personal and social development.

The youngest pupils settle quickly in the reception class and soon learn to share and play together, making substantial strides in their learning. By Year 6, all pupils are very keen and enthusiastic, showing great enjoyment of all aspects of their learning. They say, "We do fun things in class". These very positive attitudes are evident in the very good behaviour around the school. Pupils feel safe because they know that the few instances of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with. They know whom to turn to if they are worried or troubled. Good monitoring of attendance has ensured that it has improved year on year and is now above average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school encourages pupils to think of others. Pupils have good opportunities to develop skills of healthy living, for example through healthy eating. Well-supervised and active 'PE breaks' (brief periods of outdoor exercise) enliven the afternoons, get pupils going and help them focus on their next lessons. The school council gives good opportunities for pupils to represent their classes and take responsibility. They feel confident that their views will be heard and acted on.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because of good teaching that is planned well to meet their needs. Teaching across the school reflects a shared approach among staff. The consistent application of school policies helps ease the transition from one year to the next. Lessons are well managed and resources are organised effectively. Good classroom management, based on good relationships, means that little time is wasted in dealing with unsatisfactory behaviour. Nevertheless, teachers have to deal with some difficult pupils and occasionally the learning of all is affected by the behaviour of a small minority.

In otherwise good lessons, pace tends to slacken towards the end of sessions and learning slows. The short 'PE break' in the afternoon is a good idea that works well. Pupils return to their classes refreshed and ready to continue learning. All teachers provide high levels of individual support to maintain pupils' good progress. Classroom

assistants work well with teachers to ensure that pupils with additional learning difficulties or disabilities make similarly good progress.

Teachers have established a good learning atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils enjoy learning because work is planned and presented in ways that appeal to them. For example, Year 5 pupils described their work on World War II as 'interesting and exciting'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the curriculum is good. It meets the academic and personal development needs of all pupils. A strong emphasis on basic skills ensures pupils' capability for future learning and well-being. A good range of well-attended clubs and other activities extend and reinforce learning. Pupils are particularly positive about the wide range of visits and visitors that enliven their work. Recent attention to national and other guidance has led to stronger links between subjects that promote greater interest for pupils to help them make progress. In particular, links with businesses and opportunities for pupils to work together in teams are extending their learning very well. Effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures they play a full part in all activities. However, many developments are very recent and the school is aware of the need to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness in order to continue to improve.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All pupils are well cared for and good relationships ensure that they feel confident and safe. This reflects the school's own evaluation. Systems for identifying and avoiding health and safety concerns in school and on educational visits are effective. Well established child protection procedures are known to all staff and are very effective. The school makes good use of specialist outside agencies to support their work with pupils, particularly those who may be vulnerable. Parents have good information about how well their children are doing and are able to contribute in many useful ways.

Teachers have recently established strong systems to track pupils' progress and to determine appropriately challenging targets. These are helping them to evaluate progress but they do not use them fully when planning lessons. As a result, opportunities are missed to ensure teachers and pupils know exactly what is needed to improve learning. The school's use of writing targets shows how this process can be used successfully.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection because of the effective way that it is led and managed.

The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses so that school self-evaluation is accurate in most respects. He has a well developed vision for the school's improvement, which has been ably shared with the staff so that there is a common sense of purpose. The result is a positive learning atmosphere in which pupils of all capabilities do well.

The analysis of data on standards and achievement is done well. The use of 'mind maps' (a graphic way of showing connections between different areas of an organisation on a computer) is well established to provide an overall view of the relationships between different aspects of the school's work. However, the school's improvement plan is not sufficiently clear on details of the steps necessary to secure improvement and how progress towards the school's targets will be evaluated. A good start has been made on developing the role of subject leaders and much valuable development has already taken place. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done in establishing a rigorous system of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in subjects across the curriculum.

Parents think highly of the school and the school makes considerable efforts to secure their support and partnership in their children's learning.

The governing body supports the school very well and holds it rigorously to account. Challenging targets are set for the school's work. Governors are well informed and take their work seriously. They have sought to improve it by examining their work and producing their own development plan.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, Mr Painter and I visited your school to check on how well it is doing. Thank you for making us welcome, with special thanks to all those who spoke to us and told us about your life in the school.

I am pleased to say that the school has many strengths as well as some areas that could be improved. The things we thought were particularly good are:

- The school is a happy place where you feel safe and enjoy learning.
- Teaching is good so that you make good progress in your work.
- Most of you behave well and get on with each other.
- The school listens to you and cares for you all equally.
- You are given many opportunities to take part in interesting activities.

We have asked Mr Robinson and your teachers to improve some things to make your school even better. These are:

- To put more detail into the way the school plans for the future and to work out ways of measuring improvement.
- To give subject leaders more responsibility for making sure that teaching and learning are as good as they should be.

Thank you for helping us with our work. We hope that you will continue to help your teachers to make St Mark's a good place to learn.