



Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114558
LEA East Sussex
Inspection number 279412
Inspection dates 18 May 2006 to 18 May 2006
Reporting inspector Kevin Hodge AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mark Cross
School category	Voluntary aided		Crowborough
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		East Sussex TN6 3PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01892 852866
Number on roll	94	Fax number	01892 852866
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	18 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr D P Swan

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 18 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	Inspection number 279412
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school, with all of the pupils being White British. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The majority of pupils come from relatively favourable social and economic backgrounds. When they start school, most children's attainment matches that expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mark Cross is a good school. Pupils achieve well and the caring and supportive ethos fosters good learning for the vast majority of pupils. The school evaluates its own performance accurately. Sound provision enables children to make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, by the end of which they reach the standards expected nationally. However, inadequate outdoor play facilities hamper children's personal and creative development. In other year groups, good teaching means pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time they leave school. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress due to the well focused support they receive.

Although good, teaching is better in some year groups and subjects than others. The way teachers mark pupils' work is not always as good as it could be. The quality of the curriculum is good. It develops pupils' basic skills systematically in Years 1 to 6 and promotes good progress. Class work is enriched by residential visits and extra-curricular clubs and other activities. The school works well with a number of other schools, local community groups and the church to support pupils' learning. As a result of good provision for their support, guidance and care, pupils enjoy school, feel safe and their behaviour is excellent. The headteacher, supported by an effective staff team and governing body, leads the school well. The school makes regular checks on the quality of lessons, but does not make full use of the information gained to improve teaching still further. Satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, clear plans for future development and the committed and enthusiastic approach of staff and governors mean the school is well placed to keep moving forward. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of the outside activity area to increase the range of regular activities for Reception pupils
- improve marking of pupils' work in Years 1 to 6 so that they have clearer ideas of how to improve their learning
- make the monitoring of teaching sharper so that areas of weakness can be more easily identified and used to decide priorities for improvement

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage from their average starting point and their language skills develop quickly. By the time they begin Year 1, all reach the expected standard and some exceed them in their language development. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make good progress. The national tests in 2005 indicated that Year 2 pupils performed better than the national picture, but not at the higher levels in writing. The school responded quickly to this and its focus on writing has helped improve all pupils' achievement. Pupils reach above average standards at the end of Year 6.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement has improved recently for higher attaining pupils in aspects of English and science as the school has concentrated hard on giving better opportunities to develop their skills. Current assessments predict a significant rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in this year's national tests in these subjects. The school sets challenging targets for the tests each year and is broadly successful in reaching these. As a result, standards have improved each year. Additionally, pupils show good skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties make good progress and achieve well because of the well focused support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good overall. Their social, moral and spiritual development is good, and their cultural development is satisfactory. Multicultural awareness has improved but is the weakest aspect because the opportunities to study other faiths and customs are few. First-hand resources to raise pupils' awareness are also limited. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are often exemplary. Pupils work well together and form many friendships across year groups. Older pupils are particularly mature and many act as 'buddies' to younger children. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy school, with one remarking 'It's fun to come here!' Pupils gain a good understanding about the value of contributing to the community through their participation in local community events and to wider reaching charity appeals. Year 6 pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility through their role as prefects. Their additional involvement in projects where they design and sell products, combined with good development of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, helps prepare them well for later life. Pupils know how to be safe and recognise the benefits of regular exercise and a balanced diet. The class councils have now been extended to a full school council, but this is a new development and its role in generating ideas and influencing the running of the school is at an early stage.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A clear focus on developing pupils' key skills and promoting productive relationships are the key reasons why teaching is good and why pupils learn well and enjoy their work. Stimulating activities enliven many lessons. For example, a well taught mathematics activity in the Year 3/4 class provided fast-paced mental and practical challenges so that pupils quickly learned how to calculate answers accurately and quickly. In a Year 2 science lesson, well pitched activities helped pupils understand the benefits of exercise, adequate sleep and personal hygiene. High standards of behaviour are expected, which allows teachers to make the best possible use of time. However, not all teaching is of consistently good quality in every year group or subject. In some activities in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, for example, the

opportunities for the Reception pupils to select from a range of activities, particularly in the outdoor area, are too few. In a science lesson in Year 5/6, some investigations into how materials change did not fully stretch the pupils' thinking. Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils who have learning difficulties, and these pupils are confident about their work. Teachers have effective systems for assessing pupils' overall progress and effective termly setting of targets involving children and their parents.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall, with a number of strengths. In Years 1–6, English, mathematics and science provision is good with the school moving rapidly to make changes such as providing better writing opportunities in other subjects to tackle weaknesses. Planning for mixed-age classes is generally good, and is strongest in Years 3 to 6, where it makes particularly good links between different subjects, including ICT. The provision for the Reception children is largely satisfactory, but planning for activities to link indoor and outdoor learning is hampered by the inadequate quality of the outside activity area. The school places high priority on the pupils' personal, social and health education and an established programme of activities develops it well, often through subjects such as science. The programme includes good awareness raising of such themes as how to lead a healthy lifestyle and stay safe.

Older pupils make the most of the opportunities they have to develop workplace ideas and products and enjoy becoming 'entrepreneurs' in their own authentic company. These approaches help develop a more 'creative' and relevant curriculum but they are not yet fully established in all subjects or year groups. Visits and visitors add to the pupils' enjoyment, as do the range of sporting, cultural and language-based extra-curricular clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe and supported as all staff promote good relationships and respect for the welfare of others. The school liaises quickly and effectively with external agencies to provide extra support for vulnerable pupils or those with learning difficulties. Child protection arrangements are good and health and safety procedures are satisfactory. A good induction system quickly settles children into the Reception class. Most pupils joining other year groups settle happily into the school's routines. The school's good partnership with parents and carers is confirmed by a very positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. One parent commented that 'The school really does have each child's interest at heart.' In Year 6, pupils are confident about their pending transfer to secondary education and some links with a local college are providing extra opportunities for the highest attaining pupils. Ways of assessing pupils' progress are good and have improved since the previous inspection, particularly in monitoring their progress over time. The marking of pupils' work, while regular, is inconsistent between classes and subjects and so they are not always sure

what they have to do to improve their work. The individual target setting for pupils is becoming established and liked by pupils and parents who are involved well in the process.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management are good and have contributed effectively to the improvements made in the school. By leading the school with commitment, skill and a team approach, the headteacher helps create a positive atmosphere for learning where pupils are motivated and achieve good results. The school's process of evaluating its performance is effective. It involves all staff and governors and includes key points for development that have been raised by parents. For example, they were concerned about supervision before school started and mid morning snacks for the children. The school responded quickly to clarify policy and propose solutions. Good quality subject action plans constructed by staff have had a positive impact on improving standards. The headteacher monitors teaching regularly and analyses teaching and learning satisfactorily. However, monitoring does not enable the school to have a clear view of the variation in the quality of teaching, which is better in some classes and subjects than others. A clearer, more precise view of where overall improvements are needed would help improve the quality of teaching still further.

Governors provide good support, and the current arrangements to share the leadership of the governing body are well thought out and effective. Governors are involved effectively in the school strategic planning, which helps the school to develop a clear short-term plan of action, deploy staff well and use additional resources effectively.

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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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	2	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?	2	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	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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	2	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

We really liked visiting your school and enjoyed meeting you and the staff. Here are some of the things we found out while we were with you.

What we liked most about your school:

You reach good standards in your work and enjoy your English, mathematics science and ICT activities.

You behave extremely well in class and around the school.

The headteacher and staff work well together and help you to develop confidence and feel safe in school.

You do interesting activities in lessons, such as the oldest pupils designing products from their 'mini' companies to sell at the summer fair.

You understand about the best things to eat and why it's good to take exercise.

You like taking responsibility for things like fund raising to help others.

Your parents or carers think it's a good school and helps you feel safe and learn. What we have asked the school to do now:

Make the outside activity area for the Reception children an even more exciting area to learn.

Make sure the teachers in different classes mark your work in similar ways so that you are always challenged to do your very best.

Just as we have asked you to do better, your teachers, too, should also be helped to spot ways they can improve on their teaching, even though it is usually pretty good.

Best wishes for your future.