



St Mark's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 116389
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 279812
Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006
Reporting inspector John Earish

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Queen's Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Farnborough
Age range of pupils	4–11		GU14 6DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01252544155
Number on roll (school)	104	Fax number	01252544155
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Felicity Milne
		Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school is situated on the edge of Farnborough. The school admits pupils from a wide variety of social backgrounds. Almost all are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national 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 is a good school, with many outstanding features. It is working with determination to become an outstanding school in all respects. One of the oldest pupils commented, 'St Mark's is a very good school...It has a few weaknesses but they are so small as to be insignificant'. Provision for pupils' personal development, well being and care are outstanding. A card on the headteacher's desk declares that 'to teach is to touch a life for ever' and this maxim underpins all that the school does to make every child feel special. Parents agree and are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school. Several wrote to express their admiration at the commitment shown by staff at all levels which makes 'St Mark's very special'.

Leadership and management are good. Very effective leadership by the headteacher gives a clear direction to the work of the school, and is clearly a significant factor behind the school's success. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement amongst all staff. Above average standards have been sustained for several years and boys and girls of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well. There is no complacency, and staff are working hard to make all aspects of the school outstanding. To this end, effective action has been taken to ensure that evaluation of the school's performance is incisive. This has promoted highly focussed school improvement especially in sustaining consistently high achievement in mathematics. However, the impact of these changes has yet to be thoroughly evaluated. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps young children settle quickly and effortlessly into school life. This is a very good preparation for future life and learning.

Good achievement is rooted in the good quality of the teaching and the good range of interesting and challenging tasks which encourage children to work hard. At the heart of this success lies the skilful use of assessment information to set work that corresponds to the pupils' varying needs and abilities. Pupils commented on the quality of the teachers' marking and said it helped them improve their work. As one parent wrote, 'the teachers go out of their way to find interesting things to inspire and motivate the children'. This has a very positive effect on pupils' behaviour, motivation and relationships which are excellent.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because they are very well cared for at school and as a result feel secure and happy, a view endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents. They enjoy coming to school and take great pride in all that they do. Pupils treat each other with respect and willingly respond to opportunities to accept responsibility. There are very strong partnerships with the community and with outside agencies to promote learners' well-being. As a result, pupils feel happy, secure and quickly become confident, independent learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the recent changes to the curriculum to ensure consistently high achievement in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children start school with skills and abilities that are just above those expected of four year olds. They make good progress in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum and by the end of the Reception year most exceed the goals expected for their age.

Standards are above average in all classes. The school's performance overall in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and 6 is consistently well above the national averages. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well and make good progress in sustaining these high levels of performance. This occurs because they are taught well, they are given challenging targets to achieve, and their rates of progress in meeting these targets are rigorously checked. Achievement in mathematics is good, but it is not as consistent over time as in other subjects. Changes have been made to the mathematical curriculum to address this weakness. Early indications show these changes are effective, but the impact has yet to be thoroughly evaluated. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are given good quality help in meeting their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' are helped to understand their feelings and actions and how they affect others. Their behaviour and relationships are outstanding. Pupils care for each other and for members of the community. As one parent wrote, 'the school adds a community based and spiritual dimension which we as a family regard as important for a well rounded education'. Attendance is well above average and is further evidence that pupils enjoy coming to school.

Pupils are well aware of the importance of healthy eating and staying fit. They participate fully in games, physical education lessons and the good range of clubs the school offers. The pupils contribute extremely well to community decisions through the school council. The pupils are aware of how important it is to help others both in school and the wider community. They raise money for charities such as the Tsunami appeal and sponsor a toddler in Sierra Leone. Pupils rapidly acquire literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills [ICT] that will equip them well for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective because teachers know pupils well, have high expectations of them and plan work that matches their individual needs and capabilities. The school is striving for the quality of teaching to be outstanding. This means they are tackling well the few occasions when introductions to activities are too long or complicated. Pupils are given tasks that encourage them to work together and learn from each other. These are interesting, enjoyable and challenging because teachers use a variety of teaching styles and methods. Consequently, pupils achieve well.

Assessment is used successfully to identify, track and support pupils' learning needs, and to set group and individual targets. As a result pupils know what they need to do to improve. The pupils' assessment books, are a valuable monitoring tool; not least for the pupils themselves who enjoy looking back over their own achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that motivates the pupils and promotes their enjoyment of learning. Basic skills are taught effectively. Teachers plan tasks and activities that build on previous work and enable pupils to make good progress. The quality and range of the planned activities in the Foundation Stage are good, with a good balance between the work chosen by the teacher and activities selected by the children.

Throughout the school, the pupils increasingly use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills confidently in other subjects. For example, recent changes to the mathematical curriculum are beginning to provide more opportunities to develop number skills in a range of activities and contexts.

The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to participate and enjoy a good range of enrichment activities and school clubs. Such experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, teach skills that contribute to their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school gives its pupils outstanding care, guidance and support, a view endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents. A close check is kept on pupils' well-being and they are taught how to take care of themselves and how to make healthy and safe choices. Health and safety and child protection procedures are effective and are reviewed regularly. There are very effective methods for keeping track of pupils' progress and these are used perceptively to set challenging targets. Pupils particularly appreciate the opportunities they have to assess their own progress. They find this

very helpful as it enables them to understand how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve. There are excellent systems to identify any individual pupil who is not making as much progress as they should so that immediate action can be taken to address underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a very effective leader, and is supported well by her teachers. She shows a strong determination to ensure that all pupils reach their potential and has high expectations of what can be achieved. These are consistently realised because pupils are able to flourish in a positive learning environment where all are valued and supported.

Teachers monitor their areas of responsibility well and use the information which they gather to make useful contributions to the school's improvement. Test results and assessments are analysed, the quality of teaching is checked and regular reports on the school's provision are made to the governing body. Recent changes to the evaluation of the school's performance have made it more incisive which has promoted highly focussed school improvement, particularly in mathematics. However, the impact on learning has yet to be fully evaluated. The school maintains the many strong features identified at the time of the last inspection and continues to seek improvement. It is very well placed to improve further.

The governors steer the work of the school very effectively. They work successfully with the headteacher to continually improve the provision for the pupils, and have significantly improved the accommodation. Statutory requirements are fully met.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following my visit to your school I would like to tell you what I think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

There are lots of things that I like about your school. Some of them are:

- You make good progress and achieve good standards.
- Your school is friendly and welcoming. You behave really well and are friendly towards each other.
- You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons.
- You are taught well, and when you find work hard you are given the right sort of help.
- The school is good at organising lots of extra things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.#
- Your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are good at making sure that you get the best education.

I think that you go to a good school. All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this I think that the most important thing to do next is to make sure that all your tasks and activities help you do really well in mathematics.

Yours sincerely,

John Earish

Lead Inspector