



St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100444
Local Authority Islington
Inspection number 285794
Inspection date 1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Richard Hancock

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sussex Way
School category	Voluntary controlled		London
Age range of pupils	4-11		N19 4JF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7272 5967
Number on roll (school)	207	Fax number	020 7561 9013
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Althea Baker
		Headteacher	Dawn Ferdinand
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This one form entry school serves a multi-ethnic community. Over a third of pupils are learning English as an additional language. Many pupils are bi-lingual. A small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average but the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is much higher than average. The economic and social backgrounds of pupils are mixed, nearly half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, a figure which is much 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: 1

The school is outstanding. Pupils' starting points are well below average but they get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and make excellent progress in the school so that by the end of Year 6 standards are above average. The achievement of pupils is outstanding. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils because the needs of all are extremely well looked after.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. The school puts the pupils at the heart of all that it does. Pupils behave extremely well and this helps them concentrate and make the very most of their learning. They observe the excellent set of 'Golden Rules' drawn up to help the school run well. Most attend regularly but a few are late for school. Pupils feel very safe and have a thorough understanding of how to stay healthy. They are extremely enthusiastic about school because lessons provide enjoyable opportunities for them to learn and they find the whole school community 'so friendly.' They are eager for success and in assembly pupils are extremely proud to be recognised as winning writers in the story writing competition. They know much about their own community and their knowledge of the wider world is strong. Emphasis on the development of basic skills ensures that the preparation for pupils' future economic well being is outstanding.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers' presentational skills are of a high order, and lessons have clear aims, are well planned, and strongly stimulate learning. Teaching assistants and learning mentors also work very effectively to help pupils learn. In some lessons the pace slows and pupils are not as involved as they might be. Some of the feedback pupils receive is extremely helpful to them, especially in literacy, but it is inconsistent and they are not always sure of what they have to do next.

The curriculum is outstanding and has the right emphasis on the development of basic skills. It responds very well to pupils' needs, for instance the school realised recently that Year 2 pupils were not reading well enough and writing standards in Years 5 and 6 were not high enough. It has effectively addressed both issues. All pupils are very well cared for and the school makes the best possible use of external agencies where further support is needed. The headteacher and staff in key roles provide outstanding leadership by ensuring that all that they do serves the best interests of pupils and creates the 'Love, joy and encouragement' that lie at the heart of the school's mission. Management is outstanding. All aspects of the school's performance are rigorously reviewed and monitored, and data analysis is a strength. Strategies to improve areas where the school has perceived weaknesses are very well managed and show positive results. Members of the governing body visit regularly to see the school at work and know it well. Their expertise enables them to support and challenge the school to continue to set challenging targets. Because there is such a strong team spirit and so much evidence of success, the school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve some aspects of teaching by involving pupils more in all lessons and making sure that they receive helpful feedback.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The starting points of pupils are well below average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were slightly above average which represented very good progress, especially in writing and mathematics. Results in reading were slightly below the national average. Tests results at the end of Year 6 were above average and show an improving trend although the improvement is less marked in English than in mathematics and science. Results at Level 5 were above average in mathematics and science but were below average in English. Overall standards are above average and the achievement of pupils is outstanding. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding and no group of pupils underachieves. The school always sets very challenging targets for pupils and the standard of current work indicates that pupils are on track to reach them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. They feel very safe and protected and are very knowledgeable about how to stay healthy. They thoroughly enjoy school, and one parent spoke for many, saying 'My children do not like weekends and holidays because they love coming to St Mark's. In assemblies pupils celebrate the joy of living with vigour, pray and reflect, and sing with passion. Pupils in the Foundation Stage expressed wonder on their imaginary visit to the moon and older pupils have an impressive awareness of different cultures, such as the life styles of Ugandan children. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school council confidently represents the views of pupils. 'Saviours,' trusted helpers, very successfully undertake tasks for the school community. Pupils' growing mastery of basic skills and their teamwork show outstanding preparation for their future economic well being. Pupils know right from wrong, relate easily, and behaviour is exemplary. Attendance has improved and is now slightly above average but some pupils are not punctual to school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. A distinguishing characteristic is the very high quality of teachers' presentational skills. Lessons have clear aims, high levels of interest,

and questioning is used expertly to reinforce pupils' understanding. Especially good use is made of interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' interest. In some lessons the pace flags and pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration and are not involved enough in learning. Teachers and teaching assistants prepare lessons thoroughly, and ensure that the different needs of pupils are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well taught. Their needs are carefully analysed and very well addressed, especially in reading and writing. Some of the guidance given to pupils on how to improve is of high quality, especially in literacy, but there are inconsistencies in this area of the school's work and marking does not always help pupils know what they have to do to get better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It has breadth and balance and serves the needs of all pupils. There is strong emphasis on the development of literacy, not only in the extremely effective strategies for improving reading and writing skills but in all learning. Numeracy is also very well addressed. Lessons in science and personal, social and health education help pupils to deepen their knowledge of the principles of healthy living. The use of computers effectively broadens learning further. Events such as Black history month, and the study of major figures from different ethnic backgrounds, strongly promote cultural diversity. The school makes excellent use of specialist help to develop pupils' skills in dance, music and drama. They have outstanding opportunities to join clubs, take part in sport, and to perform in concerts. Because of its emphasis on the basic skills and the opportunities for team work and problem-solving in lessons, outstanding scope is given to pupils to prepare for their future economic well being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils are very well looked after and there are strong systems to safeguard and protect them which promote their confidence. The successful breakfast club helps pupils get off to a strong start each day. Learning mentors work skilfully to help pupils make the most of learning and teaching assistants ensure the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well met. Pupils with a medical condition receive especially good care. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies, such as the school counsellor and home school support worker, to provide further help for pupils. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked and extra support is provided where most needed. Pupils have clear targets to aim for and some of the feedback to pupils is especially good but it is inconsistent so sometimes they do not receive enough clear guidance on what to do to improve. Support, care and guidance in the Foundation Stage are outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has inspired staff to create a school which expresses a strong vision in all areas of its work. The best interests of the individual pupil lie at the heart of all it does. Pupils' progress is tracked so the school knows which pupils meet their challenging targets. Those succeeding are encouraged to improve and any needing further support receive it. Monitoring is extensive and has led to improvements in many areas of the school's work such as lesson planning. The school's strengths and areas for development have been accurately identified and development plans contain appropriate priorities for action. The very knowledgeable and committed governing body is outstanding in the informed way it supports and challenges the school to set further targets for it to attain. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
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	1
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

I very much enjoyed my recent visit to your school and want to thank you for the friendly way you greeted me, the help you gave me in finding my way around, and for sharing with me your views of the school. I thought you might like to read the story of my day.

First of all, I met the headteacher and some of the school's governors and I was able to see how well they work together to provide an outstanding education for you. Then I visited the breakfast club to see how all the pupils were getting off to healthy start to the school day. Then I met some of your parents on the playground. So many told me how much you enjoyed school, something I was soon able to see for myself.

I went on a tour of the school and enjoyed looking around the bright classrooms and could see from the displays the wide variety of topics you study. I observed some lessons and could see that they were outstanding. The standards of your work are above average and you are making very good progress. Behaviour was excellent wherever I went. I especially enjoyed meeting members of the school council to learn about the part they play in representing your views on how the school can be further improved. I also enjoyed meeting so many 'Saviours' who were doing important jobs to help the school run smoothly and whom I could see were being kind to people as well. One highlight was your singing in assembly and I have never heard the piano played with such passion. I thought it would break into pieces! You all certainly celebrated the joy of life. I found it exhilarating.

Your school has some very good plans for its future improvement and I am recommending that it also does its best to ensure that as many lessons as possible provide you with the very best opportunities to learn and that you also get good clear guidance on how to improve your next piece of work.

Congratulations on the part you are all playing in helping the school to be outstanding and best wishes for the future.

Richard Hancock. Lead inspector.