



# St Mark's Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 102645  
**Local Authority** Merton  
**Inspection number** 286449  
**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Brian Evans

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	St Mark's Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Mitcham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		CR4 2LF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8648 2339
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	211	<b>Fax number</b>	020 8646 3831
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Rev Canon Stephen Coulson
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Irene Pinner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 October 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–11	21–22 November 2006	286449

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

From 2002–2004 St Mark's was re-organised from a first school to a primary school. It serves a community located in an urban area which is being redeveloped. There is a very diverse mix of ethnic groups in the school. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is well above average and rising, the most common languages being Arabic, Somali and Tamil. Pupils' mobility is above average and an above average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Children enter the school with well below average basic skills and include a number who have little or no English.

## 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 accurately perceives itself as a good school and gives good value for money. It is clear that every child matters and pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Standards have risen very significantly since September 2005 and are now close to the national average by Year 6. This represents good achievement in the light of pupils' starting points. A good proportion of pupils are making very good progress in their personal development and academic achievement. Attendance is improving and is now satisfactory. Pupils behave very responsibly and respond well to opportunities provided by the school to develop their personal and social skills through a wide range of activities including clubs, music and physical activity. Parents praise the quality of provision. One parent stated 'I think this school is good at keeping a check on my son's progress and provides booster classes for those pupils who need extra learning'.

All children are given a good start to their education in the Foundation stage. They settle in quickly because teaching is good and learning activities are planned to meet the needs of individual children. Standards are below average by the end of Year 2 but, nevertheless, pupils make good progress.

Until recently, achievement in Years 3 to 6 was unsatisfactory and standards were too low. In 2006 the school succeeded in radically reversing a downward trend. Good leadership and management from the headteacher and her deputy have led to major improvements in behaviour and learning strategies and so overall achievement and standards rose sharply. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 now make good progress and standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Older pupils and parents confirm this recent success and the enjoyment of pupils in their learning.

Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well because they are given challenging projects which test their skills appropriately. A Year 6 pupil had produced a movie on the River Thames and inspectors were advised by his friends to 'get his autograph now before he's a famous film director'. There has been a successful emphasis on speaking and listening throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language are given outstanding support and make good progress.

Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers use information from assessments well and share their planning with a strong team of classroom assistants. As a result, work is often pitched at the right level to meet the learning needs of pupils. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching. For example, teachers do not always make clear to pupils what they must do to improve their performance. There is inadequate provision for teachers to share best practice and help each other improve. Overall, the school has responded well to the issues raised in the last inspection and has come through a difficult reorganisation period well. Self-evaluation is good and gives the school a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. Given its recent track record, the strong leadership team and the quality of work observed, the school's capacity to improve is good.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning by sharing best classroom practice throughout the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well and standards are now broadly average. Standards, as judged by teacher assessment and national tests, were well below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2004 and 2005, with particularly low English results in 2005 for Year 6 pupils. However, in 2006 there was a major change because all but one of the Year 6 pupils attained the standard expected nationally in English. Results in mathematics and science also improved significantly in 2006 and are broadly average. The progress of both boys and girls was much better than expected, given their well below average standards on entry to the school. Standards in speaking and listening are now average and reading and writing skills are rising. Younger pupils build well on their work in the Foundation Stage. Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved, although they are still below average. Pupils make good progress through the school and the improvement in achievement patterns is being maintained. They know that they must think carefully when answering, explaining themselves, clearly and listening carefully to each other and the teacher. As a result, all groups of pupils learn from the clear and thoughtful exchanges which take place. The support for pupils for whom English is at an early stage of acquisition is outstanding and these pupils make very good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well aware of safe and healthy behaviour and take part with great enthusiasm in opportunities for sport and play. Self-esteem is built very well across all ethnic groups and cultures. Behaviour throughout the school and in lessons is excellent with very few exceptions. Pupils understand that some of their peers have behaviour difficulties and need extra attention. They are not intimidated because they feel securely supported by all adults in the school. Pupils comment that 'learning is fun'; most know their targets and enjoy achieving them. Pupils greatly enjoy singing, lunchtime dance sessions and football coaching. One pupil returned from a session with the running club clearly elated by her success. The school's strong focus on basic skills and visits to a wide range of locations contribute well to pupils' economic well-being. Attendance is satisfactory; it has been below average but is improving this year and some classes are currently recording well above average levels.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching varies from outstanding to satisfactory but is predominantly good. It is improving because there is a well structured professional development programme for teaching and support staff which is focused on extending their range of teaching and learning strategies. Pupils are keen to learn and parents are confident that their children are making progress. In a typical lesson, the time spent listening to teachers is balanced well with good opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning. For example, a Year 6 French lesson included the use of an interactive whiteboard, catching bean bags and a discussion on pupils' pets. In a number of less effective lessons the pace of learning was slower because pupils did not have enough time to be involved in their learning. Some teachers are very clear in explaining to pupils what they need to do to learn and make progress but this not consistently so in all lessons. The use of assessment and marking is generally good and supports learning well. Teaching assistants work well with teachers, make an important contribution to learning and support pupils with language and learning difficulties very effectively.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good providing pupils with a broad and interesting range of work. An ongoing review of the curriculum is leading to improvements. Pupils are given more opportunities to practise their basic skills through cross-curricular topics and, for example, by visits to the seaside. The school has increased the frequency with which computers are used to enhance learning in the classroom and is continuing to develop this further. A significant strength is that work is planned well to meet the needs of pupils with English as an additional language who arrive at the school at different times during the school year. Pupils enjoy the opportunities the curriculum offers to take on responsibilities within the school. They participate enthusiastically in school clubs and activities and are successful in developing a wide range of interests and enjoyment. Good features include opportunities for pupils to extend their skills by learning a musical instrument, educational visits and learning French in Years 3 to 6.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The school takes great care to ensure that all pupils are personally cared for and are physically safe. Adults know pupils' needs very well and provide excellent role models. The premises and playgrounds are free from hazards and very well maintained by the premises officer. Procedures for child protection are clear to all staff and confidential information is dealt with appropriately. The school has very good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and intervention is swift if there are concerns. The small number of pupils with behaviour problems is supported very well. The school maintains

effective links with a range of outside agencies for specialist support as required. The Family-School Counsellor is regularly available and provides a valuable listening ear and support for parents and pupils. Most parents feel that links with the school are very good.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a firm grasp of pupils' needs and with her senior management team has developed appropriate policies that support progress and personal development well. The headteacher's vision, shared by her deputy head and staff, has enabled the school to dramatically raise standards by emphasising effective learning and good behaviour as the keys to success. These core improvement strategies are monitored closely and appropriate action is taken to support classes where needs are greatest. Governors give good support and act as effective critical friends. However, management strategies for sharing good practice between teachers are at an early stage. Resources are well managed to support learning policies. Given the good progress pupils make over time as a result of the tightly organized support, the school offers good value for money. Equality of opportunity, for example for pupils with English as an additional language, is promoted well. Improving low standards, caring for pupils with high levels of need and building their confidence and securing consistently good behaviour demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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**

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school and for being so eager to tell us about your work. We enjoyed our visit very much and think that St Mark's Primary is a good school. There are many things about your school that we like very much.

- You behave very well in the classroom and around the school and it is a pleasure to talk to you.
- Teachers teach well. You like your teachers, listen carefully to them and try your best. As a result you achieve well by the time you leave the school.
- You say to us that you feel safe and happy at school. You are kind to one another.
- There are good examples of your work in the classrooms and around the school. Photographs of your activities on display around the school were very good. For example, we liked those of the visit to the seaside at Littlehampton.
- The headteacher and her staff, with your support, are ensuring that the school is continuing to improve.

To make the school even better we have asked your teachers to share their ideas and ways of working so that all teaching is as good as the best in the school. You can help by always telling your teachers when you do not understand the work you are given.

Thank you again and best wishes for the future to all of you.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans

Lead Inspector