

St Mark's Voluntary Aided Ecumenical CofE/Methodist Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109273
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	288335
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachael Fisher
Headteacher	Helen Bath
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	St Mark's Road Worle Weston-super-Mare BS22 7PU
Telephone number	01934 513008
Fax number	01934 522007

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. Numbers on roll have now stabilised after a period of recent steady growth which led to the school having two classes in all year groups. It serves a mixed residential area on the fringes of Weston-super-Mare. Almost all the pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is a little below the national average but distributed unequally between year groups. The attainment of children on entry to the Reception Year is broadly at the level expected.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some very strong features and serves its community well. A particular strength is the carefully balanced and successful commitment to pupils' academic progress and personal development. Good leadership by the headteacher, members of the leadership team and the governing body, has led to significant progress and improvement since the last inspection whilst maintaining previous strengths at a time of substantial growth.

Pupils achieve well during their time in school. Pupils in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their learning because provision here is good. This good progress is maintained, accelerating by the end of Year 2. Standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. In 2006 standards attained by 11 year olds in national tests slipped, but the pupils currently in Year 6 are well on course to attain standards significantly above the national average as a result of good achievement.

The consistently promoted aims and values of the school lead to pupils' good personal development and well-being in a very caring and stimulating environment. Within the overall good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' spiritual experiences and awareness are outstanding as are the caring and thoughtful ways they relate to one another. These contribute to the outstanding way in which they feel safe and know how to look after themselves and one another. The level of pastoral care for pupils is also outstanding within what is good care, guidance and support of all pupils throughout their time in school. Teaching and learning are good overall and consistently so in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 there is much good teaching but it is less consistent. In some lessons and classes in Years 3 to 6, expectations of pupils are not always high enough and pupils need more help in understanding about the ways they are learning. The curriculum is good and teachers plan a wide range of stimulating experiences in their classrooms and beyond.

Leadership and management are good and result in the good personal development and achievement of pupils. The school's structured approach to planning further improvements carefully reflects the accurate judgements made through the comprehensive range of checks undertaken. The school has secure views of its strengths and weaknesses and overall effectiveness. It puts this understanding to good use when planning further developments and, as a result, has good capacity to improve further. However, two procedures for checking the performance of the school are not fully efficient. The way the comprehensive information about the progress of individual pupils is collated and stored makes it complex and time consuming for leaders to draw out some of the trends and patterns in the progress of whole groups. Checks on pupils' work by some subject leaders are not always sufficiently tightly focused on specific aspects of their work or ways they are taught, making it difficult to identify precise factors which need to be followed up.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teaching in all classes in Years 3 to 6 reflects high expectations of pupils and helps them to develop a good understanding of their learning.
- Record information about pupils' progress in a way that makes it easy for leaders to draw out trends in the performance of different groups.
- Make sure that all subject leaders conduct checks on pupils' work in a way that is tightly focused on aspects of their work or the way they are taught.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a wide range of experiences indoors and out, and achieve well in all areas but particularly in personal, social and emotional development and physical development. Achievement in Years 1 to 6 is good although pupils' progress is not uniform in all years. It is particularly good in Years 2 and 6. In Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. Pupils currently in Year 2 are well on course to meet their challenging targets. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, representing good progress for these pupils in relation to their starting points. Almost all pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain their challenging targets and some are expected to exceed them. The targets for pupils currently in Year 5, if attained, would raise standards even higher in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

'My child is happy and so are we', was a view of one parent referring to how effectively the school promotes pupils' personal development. Central to the pupils' good personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are the excellent relationships and friendships that they form. A pupil who recently joined the school said, 'I have tons more new friends here.' Pupils enjoy learning. Their attendance has improved and is good. Behaviour is also good and often exemplary as seen in school assemblies. Pupils do not see bullying as an issue and know what to do if potential issues arise. They talk confidently about the benefits of healthy eating although some continue to enjoy sweet and sticky treats in their lunch boxes. They contribute well to the life of the school through a good range of responsibilities, for example through the organisation of family groups led by school councillors. Pupils have a good awareness of cultures around the world but are less informed about the cultural diversity of modern Britain. The skills developed when they leave the school prepare them well for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan a good variety of activities, usually carefully matched to pupils' needs, and these capture pupils' interest and promote their enjoyment of learning. Pupils respond well when asked to collaborate in small groups and are keen to contribute to class discussions. In the Foundation Stage teachers ensure a good balance between activities led by teachers and those chosen by children. Teachers throughout the school set high standards regarding the presentation of pupils' work. Many of them provide good feedback and guidance through their marking in pupils' books about how well the pupils have completed their work. Some of this is exemplary, for example in Year 2. In some lessons in Years 3 to 6 the level of challenge and the expectation of pupils, particularly for those who are more able, whilst satisfactory, does not fully extend their learning. The learning of some pupils in Years 3 to 6 has been disrupted due to frequent changes and uncertainties in staffing. Very good use is made of learning support

assistants and this means that pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties, often receive effective one-to-one support in small groups and this boosts their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to cover all the required areas with links between subjects making activities more relevant. Focus weeks such as 'science week' and 'multicultural week' bring learning to life and allow a more in depth approach to some topics. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, often for short periods, following the careful assessment of pupils' progress. Activities are provided for the most able pupils but these are not fully integrated into routine classroom lessons. The outstanding provision outdoors in the Foundation Stage contributes to children's good start in school. The promotion of all pupils' personal, social and emotional development through the curriculum is evident in displays around the school. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved substantially and pupils use computers confidently in their work in various subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A thorough and consistent approach ensures all pupils receive outstanding pastoral care, including those who are most vulnerable. This is reflected in the high level of security, cleanliness and care of the whole school, including the toilets. The appointments of a learning mentor and lunchtime first aider have contributed significantly to the overall care and support of pupils. Pupils know they have someone to talk to, that they are listened to and feel valued. Pupils are given good academic support and guidance as they move through the school. In a few instances in classes in Year 3 to 6, guidance by teachers when marking work does not make it clear what pupils need to do to improve. As a result, not all pupils in Years 3 to 6 understand well enough how they are learning. Governors' policies designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously by all staff who receive regular training about their responsibilities for ensuring that pupils are protected.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher works systematically and effectively to promote high standards. She has successfully increased the roles of the leadership team and governors in strategic thinking and policy making. She has also achieved a strong recognition by all teachers of their shared accountability for the ultimate achievement of pupils when they leave the school.

Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is good. The governing body is well led and involved in checking the performance of the school. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge. The leadership team and governors have good planning procedures and use these effectively to respond to what they find out about the performance of the school, for example by the appointment and careful deployment of additional staff to work with specific groups and individuals. This has led to substantial improvements, for example, in pupils' behaviour, the use of ICT and provision in the Foundation Stage.

There are comprehensive ways of checking the performance of the school, including the collection of detailed information about each pupil's progress. This information is used well to

respond to the needs of individuals and promote their good progress. However, some of the information is not clearly collated making it more difficult for leaders to identify progress of groups over time and trends within whole year groups of pupils. Subject leaders carry out checks in their areas but some of these are too broad and not sharply enough focused on specific outcomes for pupils. As a result, it is difficult for some subject leaders to pull together the most important findings which need to be followed up.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	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

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

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?	2

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.

Annex A

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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 May 2007

Dear Children

St Mark's VA Ecumenical Church of England/Methodist Primary School, St Mark's Road, Worle, North Somerset BS22 7PU

A team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with a number of you in lessons, looking at some of your work and meeting groups of you, including members of your school council. Thank you for making us so welcome. I am pleased to say yours is a good school and some things are really good. Here are some of the highlights we found:

- You work hard and make good progress during your time in the school.
- You behave well and take great care of each other so that everyone feels safe and likes being at what is a very happy school.
- The work of your school council with the family groups is impressive.
- Your teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to do in the classroom. Children in Reception have a great time on activities out of doors as well.
- Everyone who works at the school takes especially good care of you, and helps those of you who get worried or have a problem.
- The school leaders and governors work closely together to make sure the school keeps getting better.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to think about these three things to improve the school even more:

- Try to ensure all the lessons in Years 3 to 6 are equally good so that those of you in these years are given more things to do which encourage you to try even harder and think very carefully about what you are learning.
- Find better ways for the leaders to collect and manage the information about your progress so they can easily see any differences in progress by various groups.
- Help subject leaders to be clear about exactly what they are looking for when they carry out checks on your work or on what the school is doing.

We hope you all continue to enjoy your time at St Mark's.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector