



# Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111246  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288902  
**Inspection dates** 25–26 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mike McLachlan

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>	School Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Antrobus, Northwich
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Cheshire CW9 6LB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 891200
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	99	<b>Fax number</b>	01606 892435
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Dr Eric Haworth
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Batchelor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 February 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Antrobus St Mark's is a very small primary school that draws its pupils from a relatively affluent, rural area. Attainment of children on entry to the school is generally above average although there are variations year on year. The number of pupils claiming a free school meal is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number with statements of special educational needs is above average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none are at early stage in learning English. The school has achieved Arts and Active mark gold awards and is in the process of reapplying for them. There are very well established links with the on site private Nursery.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Antrobus St Mark's is an outstanding school that enjoys the full and well deserved support of parents and the local community. The school gives outstanding value for money. Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards reached by the end of Year 6 are very high. For example, in 2005 the school was placed in the top 1% of all schools nationally for the value it had added to pupils' learning. The school's own comprehensive analysis indicates that high standards and levels of achievement have been sustained in 2006. High quality, focused support ensures pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. Strong links with the on site private Nursery and the very good provision in the Foundation Stage (the Reception class) results in these children making good progress and reaching above average standards.

Pupils also make outstanding progress in their personal development and well being. The school's Christian ethos underpins all its work so that spiritual and moral development is very strong. Significant opportunities are provided to support pupils' cultural and multicultural development. A strong focus on healthy living, sports activities, community involvement and economic awareness ensures pupils are confident, sociable citizens, well prepared to move on to the next stage of their learning.

These outstanding achievements are due to the following factors.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides dynamic, sensitive and principled leadership. He, with the full support of the staff, has brought about significant improvements since the last inspection. His excellent use of performance data to check and improve pupils' learning combined with the complementary strengths of the other senior managers and subject leaders ensures that there is no complacency. Self- evaluation is used effectively to identify areas for development and there is a strong desire and considerable capacity to improve further. The school was overly modest in describing itself as good. The governing body provide additional expertise and act well as a 'critical friend'.

Teaching and learning are consistently good and often outstanding. Most lessons are exciting events where pupils enjoy learning and are keen to reach the challenging targets set for them. In the best lessons, pupils take responsibility for what and how they learn. They are able to assess for themselves how well and how confidently they are achieving their goals. Occasionally, over-direction by the teacher in some lessons does not sufficiently strengthen pupils' independent learning or help them to make judgements about their progress. The school provides a wide ranging and interesting curriculum. Staff give tirelessly of their time and energy to ensure there is an exceptionally wide range of extra curricular activities, of which take up is very high.

Care and guidance is outstanding. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and national requirements in this respect are fully met. The excellent system for tracking progress is used well to target additional support where needed.

Parents provide high levels of support. They have high expectations of and confidence in the school. Many were moved to write expressing their delight at all the school offers. 'We feel the school is a great credit to the village' and 'All children are valued as individuals and are able to feel like important members of the school community' were typical comments and demonstrate the value parents place upon all that the school provides. Pupils feel the same; as one new member of the vibrant school council aptly said, 'This is a very happy school - the best school I have ever been to.'

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

- Ensure that pupils have more opportunities to check their own progress and learn independently.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Attainment on entry to the school is above average. Throughout their time in the Foundation Stage very good support and teaching results in pupils making good progress in all areas of learning, so they become confident learners in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make good progress, reaching standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are above average, with considerable numbers reaching the higher levels. These strong beginnings provide a firm foundation for what is outstanding progress in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6). The test results for the 2006 tests and the school's own detailed tracking systems indicate that these successes are expected to continue. The school is improving rapidly, meeting and often exceeding its challenging targets and, importantly, sustaining the significant gains made since the last inspection.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The school rightly provides many opportunities for pupils to become aware of other faiths and cultures. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported. Outstanding academic success, combined with many business and charitable ventures, ensure pupils understand the world of work and their contribution to the wider community. Great emphasis is placed on promoting healthy lifestyles, for example through the healthy eating lunch menus and the very high numbers of pupils who take part in before- and after-school sports activities. Pupils of all abilities, elected by their peers, serve on a very active school council. Consequently, they become mature and responsible citizens by the time they move on to secondary school. As one parent said, and this was echoed by many, 'The atmosphere is always positive and encouraging and positive behaviour is wonderfully rewarded.'

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and often outstanding. Very good planning, combined with a sharp focus on identifying the learning targets for the school, the class and the pupils, results in lessons that have a clear direction for learning. Consequently, pupils are aware of how well they are achieving in lessons and what they need to do to move on to the next stage in their learning. In the vast majority of lessons enjoyment is high, pupils work well together and concentrate throughout the lesson. In the best lessons, pupils of all ages show considerable maturity in directing what and how they are learning. They readily assess how well they are doing during the lesson. For example, in the Reception class, very young children plan what they are going to do and check if they are meeting their learning targets. In Years 3 and 4, pupils use a 'traffic light' system very well to indicate their level of understanding and their confidence in using the skills they have learned. Occasionally, the pupils' work is too teacher directed so while they make progress, their independent learning skills are not developed enough.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school's curriculum is outstanding. A broad and balanced curriculum is on offer throughout the school. There is due emphasis on learning through play in the Foundation Stage. Strong links and joint planning with the private Nursery enrich the experiences of these children and provide considerable opportunities for outdoor play and physical development. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is significantly enhanced by the addition of French lessons, visits and visitors and a number of additional English and mathematics activities for able pupils provided by parents. Take up of extra curricular activities is very high. For example, nearly the whole school signed up for the after school craft club. Football and netball are equally popular with a high number of boys and girls taking part. There is very good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with well planned individual support programmes and high quality support from the teaching assistants. Parents speak highly of all the school offers these pupils.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Pupils feel extremely safe, secure and happy in this school. The school has the overwhelming confidence of the parents. This very high quality care and support is clearly evident in the celebration assemblies where pupils from all year groups and of all abilities are very highly praised for their individual achievements. As a result, they are delighted by their friends' successes and spurred on to do more. The health and safety of the pupils is paramount and current government requirements in this respect

are fully met. The school has developed an excellent system for tracking pupils' academic progress and uses this data very well to intervene where they are falling behind the challenging targets set for them. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Excellent links with the Nursery school and with high schools ensure the pupils are very confident to move on to their next stage in learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding leadership from the headteacher, appointed two years ago, has enabled the school to make considerable improvements since the last inspection. He has established very effective systems to keep an accurate check on the school's performance. Very strong teamwork within the staff and a desire to respond to the criticisms of the last report have led to the establishment of very good self review systems. Consequently, subject and other leaders now have a clearer understanding of the strengths within their areas and what is needed to bring about improvements. For example, staff recently collaborated in an exercise to map the topics taught across all years. As a result, they and the pupils now have a better understanding of progression within different subjects. The governing body provides good support to the school and is now clearly acting as a critical friend, challenging the school to improve where needed.

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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>	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	1
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

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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<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>	1
<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>	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	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**

I would like to thank you for the way you made me feel at home when I visited your school. I was delighted by the way you looked after me and talked to me about your school. You are all a great credit to your homes and your school.

I think you go to a great school and you clearly think so too.

I think you work very hard to reach very high standards. I think you become very grown up by the time you leave school and you act very responsibly whatever class you are in. I particularly liked your 'friendship bench' and the way you played well together at break and lunchtimes.

I think you are taught very well. Your teachers and assistants make lessons interesting for you and they are very good at helping you understand what you need to do to reach your targets. I particularly liked the way, in some lessons, you were made to be responsible for deciding how and what you would learn so you did not have to wait to be told what to do next. I was also impressed by the way some of you were able to judge how well you were doing. I think it would be great if you worked like this more often in your lessons.

I think your teachers work really hard in teaching you a wide range of subjects. I was very impressed by the number of clubs and activities they ran before and after school. You are clearly delighted by this, as so many of you take part.

I think your school is very well led and that everyone is very proud to be part of the Antrobus St Mark's family. As one of your new school council members rightly said, 'This is a very happy school - the best school I have ever been to.'