

St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	114545
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	289962
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Dodson
Headteacher	Sharon-Marie Coombes
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001
School address	Manor Road Brighton BN2 5EA
Telephone number	01273 605588
Fax number	01273 623410

Age group	3–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school admits most pupils from the surrounding city fringe council estate, which is an area of significant social and economic deprivation. Unemployment is high and half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is much more than in most schools. Over half the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The school has Investor in People status, Quality Mark and the Silver Healthy Schools award. It is part of the local Excellence in Cities cluster of schools. A higher than average number of pupils leave or join the school at the start of each academic year.

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 that justifies its high reputation in the local area. Rapid improvement since the last inspection has been achieved through good leadership and management. The headteacher leads the school very well and has created an effective team of staff whose high expectations of themselves, other staff and pupils make this a successful school. The school has developed excellent links with other schools and organisations that have played an important part in the school's improvement. The school's self-evaluation systems are generally good, but governors recognise that they currently lack the skills necessary to support senior staff evaluate the school's performance.

Children enter the school with skills well below those found nationally. They make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. The exciting activities planned for them and the good teaching mean they make good progress, especially in their language and number skills. Standards by Year 6 are broadly in line with those found nationally, and this shows that pupils are achieving well and have made good progress. In writing and mathematics, the school recognises that pupils could do even better if they had more opportunities to practise these skills in all subjects. Pupils learn quickly because the teaching is consistently good. Teachers are very skilled at making lessons interesting so that pupils enjoy their work. One pupil put this in a nutshell when remarking, 'every day my teacher does something different and exciting'. However, occasionally, teachers make the work too hard for some pupils and they struggle to keep up with the others.

Pupils behave well because that is what is expected of them and they show a great deal of respect for others. Most pupils attend regularly and love coming to school. However, despite the school's best efforts, there are a few pupils who have too many absences. Pupils appreciate the well-planned curriculum that provides a good balance of academic work and teaches them how to live healthy lives and be a good member of the community. Parents value highly the good care, support and guidance offered by the school and say how well all adults help their children when they are worried or upset. One parent's comments were typical when saying, 'my child is so happy at school that she can't wait to go in the mornings. The progress she has made is quite remarkable'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their writing and number skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that governors are more involved in evaluating the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception make a good start to school and achieve well. They do particularly well in their speaking, reading and mathematical skills and in their knowledge of the world around them. Nevertheless, their attainment is still well below the national average by the end of their Reception year in all areas except their physical and creative development where it is below average.

Standards now attained by Year 2 pupils are below average in reading, writing and mathematics but show an improvement since last year's assessments when they were well below average. These results show good progress, particularly for those who have attended this school since

Reception. By Year 6, pupils continue to achieve well and the standards they reach are close to the national average, although there are some weaknesses in writing and mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average and show a big improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well in most subjects, making particularly good progress in their reading. However, in a few subjects they sometimes find it hard to understand the work and make less progress than they could. More able pupils make good progress and relish the challenges set for them in their literacy and numeracy groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic learners who take a pride in their work. Attendance rates are lower than normally found but are improving because of the good work done by the school to encourage parents to send their children regularly to school. The behaviour of pupils is good. They listen carefully to the teachers and respond very well to their high expectations of them.

Pupils have a good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. They enjoy the regular physical education (PE) lessons and after school sports clubs because, as one pupil remarked, 'we do PE and lots of sports to keep healthy'. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of the school council, which helps them improve the school by, for example, choosing new playground equipment and involvement in recycling projects. The well-trained 'playground buddies' do much to make pupils feel safe in the playground. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They think deeply about issues such as poverty and loneliness and show considerable respect for cultures and faiths different from their own. They are enthusiastic fundraisers for charities, and enjoy taking part in a wide range of local events, such as the Children's Parade. Their good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT and many opportunities to work in teams and support one another ensures that they are prepared well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching, from the Reception class to Year 6, explains why pupils learn so quickly. A significant strength in many lessons is teachers' high expectations for pupils to achieve. This successfully motivates pupils and gives them a pride in their achievements. Occasionally, however, teachers make the work too hard, and less able pupils struggle to understand what they are being asked to do. Teachers make lessons interesting by using exciting resources, including large whiteboards attached to computers (interactive whiteboards) that pupils find fascinating. For example, in numeracy pupils enjoy conducting investigations on the whiteboards. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to work independently and they do this well. This starts successfully in the Reception class where children soon learn how to organise their work and select their next task. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and know what they need to do to improve. The very good partnership between teachers and skilled teaching assistants ensures that pupils of all abilities usually get the support they need to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is imaginatively planned so that pupils enjoy a wide variety of experiences that bring their learning to life. It is adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the more able. However, the school recognises the need to plan more opportunities for pupils to use their writing and number skills in other subjects to improve these relative weak skills. The curriculum is enriched by well organised music and drama sessions, Spanish and special events such as when a construction engineering team worked with Year 6 pupils to build a massive suspension bridge in the school hall. Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and healthy is very well promoted through the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. There is a good range of clubs and activities provided at lunchtime and after school that are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All adults in the school ensure that pupils feel valued and always have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of pupils and parents are justified in knowing that their children are very well cared for. One parent said, 'my daughter has gained in confidence... and thanks to the very understanding teachers she has grown into a well mannered and well adjusted little girl'. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare, including child protection arrangements and risk assessments, are robust and have been commended by the local authority as a 'model of good practice'. Systems to improve behaviour are thorough and their impact can be seen every day in the good behaviour of pupils in class and around the school.

There are rigorous systems for checking and recording how well pupils are doing and for tracking their performance over time. However, at times a few teachers do not use this information well to ensure all pupils can understand the work set for them to do.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management are significant factors in the school's success. The headteacher makes her vision for the school's future clear to all staff and supports them very well in developing their skills. She has high expectations of what everyone can achieve and has created a very good team spirit amongst staff. Senior staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gained by rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning and detailed analysis of individual pupils' progress. This has enabled the school to improve in leaps and bounds since the last inspection and shows why it will continue to do well. The school is not afraid to work creatively to raise standards. For example, recent innovations in the teaching of early speaking and writing skills have already led to big improvements in pupils' attainment in all subjects in the infant classes. The leaders have developed excellent links with other professionals such as counsellors, staff from surrounding schools and health workers who contribute much to the care, support and guidance provided by the school. The largely new governing body is enthusiastic and governors come into school regularly to see pupils at work. They have, however, a limited understanding of and impact on the quality of the school's work and recognise that they will benefit from training to do this.

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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?	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	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

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	3
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

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	3
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

3 May 2007

Dear Pupils

St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Brighton, BN2 5EA

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. You all made the inspectors very welcome, and those who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your school. We enjoyed watching you work and play, and felt your singing in assembly was outstanding.

What we found out about your school

You make good progress. Your work is roughly the same standard as found in most schools, although in writing and mathematics you could do even better. You enjoy lessons, work hard and keep safe. Your behaviour is good and you are kind to each other.

Your teachers are doing a good job. They make lessons interesting and help you learn quickly. Teachers check on your progress carefully and tell you clearly how to improve your work. The activities planned for you are a good balance between subjects such as English, mathematics and science, and work to help you to learn about how to stay safe and live healthy lives. The way all adults in your school look after you is excellent. They know just what to do if you are upset or worried.

Your headteacher and other leaders run the school well. They know what needs to be improved and how it can be done. This is why your school is getting better all the time.

What we want the school to do now

- Give you more opportunities to write and use your number skills in all subjects.
- Provide extra training for the governors so that they can help the school improve more.

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston Lead inspector