

# St Mark's Church of England Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115712
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	290310
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Shield

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Harris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynne Bailey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 March 2001
<b>School address</b>	Robert Burns Avenue Benhall Cheltenham GL51 6NU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 702280
<b>Fax number</b>	01242 702281

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mark's Church of England Junior School is an average-sized junior school, serving an area of mixed housing on the outskirts of Cheltenham. While the school has considerably fewer pupils eligible for free school meals than is normal, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is about average. The vast majority of pupils are White British, with relatively few pupils from other ethnic heritages. The school has Investors in People and Healthy Schools status and both Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark.

## 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 with some outstanding features, notably in the excellent personal development of its pupils. The school hums with purposeful activity, and the sense of community is strong. Pupils get on very well with their teachers and respect is mutual. While teachers speak of the 'sense of togetherness making a difference', pupils report that they like their teachers and enjoy lessons because they are fun. A comment from one pupil, 'We work hard, but it's worth it' typifies the maturity and confidence shown by pupils.

Standards in all subjects are above average and pupils' achievements are good, given their starting points on entry in Year 3. Good progress is made in all years because good quality teaching stimulates and excites pupils to do well. Pupils are enthusiastic learners, keen to take part and succeed. They know that their dedicated teachers care that they do well. Although pupils reach good standards in all subjects, writing is less strong than other areas. This is partly because teaching does not always encourage pupils to think about how well they are doing or how they might improve.

The school's strong commitment to pupils' personal development is demonstrated in the flexibility it shows in its curriculum planning. A recent week was devoted to Every Child Matters and pupils pursued activities which helped to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of these personal skills. As a result, pupils are kind, thoughtful and sensitive to each other, with a developing understanding of their place in the school and the wider community. Behaviour is of a consistently high standard, reflecting the teachers' high expectations. Very good relationships throughout the school are the cornerstone of the school's ethos.

The good curriculum ensures pupils develop key literacy and numeracy skills securely. Good partnerships have been made with local businesses to support different aspects of pupils' learning and make their learning more meaningful. Pupils' care, guidance and support are good, and pupils feel safe and trusted. Well-managed procedures for their welfare are in place. Pupils' academic guidance and support is satisfactory and pupils' progress is tracked carefully, but assessment is not used well enough to ensure targets are challenging and that the school has a better view about how well individual pupils are doing. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher gives a strong lead and is well supported by her staff and governors. The school thrives on good teamwork. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and realistic. Much has already been achieved to make a good school even better, and there is good capacity to improve further. The school is popular with parents and has the confidence of the community it serves.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and to set them challenging targets so that standards rise even further, particularly in writing.
- Use assessment more effectively in lessons to inform pupils how well they are doing and how they might improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils reach standards which are above average and results in English, mathematics and science in national tests taken in Year 6 have been consistently and significantly above average for

several years. On entry to Year 3, pupils' attainment is broadly average, although it does vary from year to year, and in some years is above average. Given their starting points, pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. Within this overall good picture, standards of writing are less strong than reading.

The school's records show that pupils' progress continues to be good, and that challenging targets for 2007 are likely to be met. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the well-targeted support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils develop into mature and thoughtful young people whose exemplary personal development reflects the high priority the school gives to this aspect. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good, and pupils' above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school. They are keen to do well in lessons and contribute to school life. They feel safe from bullying, are responsive to others and co-operate well together. Pupils confidently express their views. They speak enthusiastically about the school and feel that there is a 'friendly atmosphere'.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and underpinned by the school's carefully considered provision in this area. Assemblies are both joyous and contemplative. While pupils sing enthusiastically, quiet moments offer them opportunities to reflect on individual and school values. Pupils willingly accept responsibility as 'partners in the management of the school' by working on the school council, acting as 'playground angels', or meeting governors to discuss school issues. They show concern for those less well off, including sponsoring a child in The Gambia. Pupils have a good understanding of issues related to healthy living, and are very well prepared for their future economic well-being, through, for example, setting a budget and making and selling goods at the Christmas Fayre.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress because, within vibrant and well-managed classrooms, the teaching makes learning exciting and fun. Learning is active and pupils are enthusiastic participants. Tasks are well chosen to make the learning interesting and relevant. Resources are well used to support pupils' learning, and information and communication technology, criticised in the last inspection, is now well used to inform teaching. Questions are used effectively to probe and deepen understanding and pupils respond with energy. They are obviously keen to please their teachers. Sensitive and well-managed support from teaching assistants ensures all pupils feel included and are encouraged to succeed. Although teaching is generally well planned to meet the needs of all pupils, including the most able, assessment is not used consistently effectively to set personal targets for pupils, to inform them how well they are doing and encourage pupils themselves to think how they might improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well planned and provides good opportunities for pupils to develop key skills in literacy and numeracy and also to apply and develop these skills in different subjects and

contexts. This increasingly cross-curricular approach is encouraging pupils to make connections and understand the relevance of their learning. However, there is scope for this to be more deeply rooted in practice. Good partnerships with a local supermarket and businesses have helped connect particular subjects such as science and design and technology to real life. An extensive programme of enrichment, visits and visitors alongside extra-curricular clubs enhances the curriculum. As part of the school's commitment to healthy eating, each class is responsible for a vegetable plot which provides food throughout the summer. The curriculum is well planned for pupils throughout the ability range. Good provision for those pupils with learning difficulties is balanced by a good programme of extension activities for those pupils identified as gifted and talented.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care and welfare of every child is the school's priority. Very good pastoral care is evident in the effective procedures for dealing with problems and the sensitive and respectful way in which pupils are treated and spoken to. Teachers know pupils very well and have an overriding concern for their well-being. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are securely in place.

Procedures for pupils' academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Progress in English and mathematics is carefully assessed half yearly, and each pupil's progress tracked through the individual school profile. This enables intervention programmes to be put in place for those pupils likely to underachieve. However, this system is not yet used with enough precision to ensure all pupils are set suitably challenging targets or to give the school a realistic view about how well pupils are progressing.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads exceptionally well, providing clear direction and leadership. She is very well supported by her deputy and together they have built on the distinctive qualities of the school and created a good team spirit. Staff are fiercely loyal and dedicated to further improvement. As a result, there is a real sense of purpose and a strong commitment amongst managers at all levels to raise standards even further. Monitoring is comprehensive and effective in ensuring the school knows itself well. However, the school improvement plan does not articulate what needs to be done with sufficient precision, especially in relation to improving standards and achievement even further.

Governors, criticised at the time of the last inspection for lacking a good overview of the school's work, are now playing an increasingly effective role through their committees and link subject responsibilities. As a result, governors are better informed and more confident in both their strategic and monitoring role. The school has the overwhelming confidence of its parents, who are very supportive of its work and proud to be associated with the school.

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## Annex A

## 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 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	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

<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	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

<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>	2

<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.



## Annex A

**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**

21 June 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England Junior School, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 6NU

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed talking to you, and particularly liked the friendly and confident way you spoke to me. Yours is a good school and I know that you are proud to attend it. What works well in your school

- It encourages you successfully to grow up into sensible and thoughtful young people.
- You work hard in lessons and join in everything the school offers with enthusiasm.
- You are well behaved and are kind to others.
- The school plans work which is interesting and fun to learn.
- Teaching is good and helps you make good progress.
- Your teachers take good care of you.
- Your headteacher and staff are working well to make your school even better.

What I have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that you do even better in writing, and that information on how well you are doing is used to plan work which enables you to do even better!
- You can help your teachers by making sure they let you how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Best wishes for the future!

Yours sincerely,

Mr Tony Shield Lead Inspector