

# St Mark's CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126015
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	315396
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Liz Kounnou

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 category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Arnold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janet Davies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Brantridge Lane Staplefield Haywards Heath RH17 6EN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01444 400398
<b>Fax number</b>	01444 401244

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

children's attainment when they start school and the progress they make from year to year in writing

the effectiveness of systems to check how well the school is doing and bring about further improvement

the quality of pupils' personal development.

The evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, analysis of information about pupils' progress and attainment, scrutiny of pupils' work in books and on display, discussions with staff, pupils and governors, and analysis of the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found little evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools and serves an economically mixed area. Only a few pupils are entitled to free school meals; however, this figure is distorted as the local authority does not provide a hot meals service. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. The school holds the following awards:

Investor in Health accreditation – July 2006

Healthy School – April 2007

Dyslexia Friendly School – July 2006

Active Mark – July 2007

Travel Mark (level 1) – July 2006

Eco School (bronze) – November 2007.

## 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 where pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards. Parents say their children are happy and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. 'My daughter skips into school every day', wrote one, whilst another commented, 'I am extremely happy with the school and couldn't hope for more'. The good level of attendance is testament to both pupils' enjoyment of school and strong and enthusiastic parental support, which has enabled the school to provide good quality resources for learning. Good leadership and management have cemented some outstanding partnerships that considerably enhance pupils' education. For example, the most able pupils are encouraged to improve their skills in mathematics and English through valuable links with a local secondary school and the Network of Eastern Area Rural Schools. Part of this work involved working together with other able pupils to read and review ten books and decide which was worthy of the West Sussex Book Award. Activities such as these, combined with pupils' good skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

For a small school, an impressive array of awards has been gained since the last inspection under the headteacher's good leadership and the tireless efforts of governors. These demonstrate the school's ambition to strive for excellence. The Victorian accommodation has been improved significantly by the addition of a new school hall. Above-average standards have been maintained in reading, mathematics and science, but progress in writing is slower. Partnership with other local schools has successfully overcome some of the challenges of leadership in a small school. In Years 5 and 6, progress in writing has begun to improve following the introduction of a joint project to improve pupils' ability to assess their own skills and progress. The project has not been as successful in other year groups, where progress in writing still lags behind that in reading. A good range of systems to check how well the school is doing ensures that the school's leaders have a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, and the capacity to bring about further improvement is good. However, middle managers are not yet fully involved in the process, and this explains why progress in writing has not yet moved forward, and the school leaders' aspirations to reach excellent levels have not yet been realised.

A really good range of extra activities that rival those found in much larger schools enhances the good curriculum. Governors and parents are fully involved in helping staff to provide these enjoyable activities, which pupils love. 'I go to a club every day', reported one eager girl. Pupils' personal skills are enriched through these activities. Plenty of sports clubs help them maintain healthy lifestyles. Pupils actively support the school and local community, often making suggestions and raising funds for good causes. School council members are proud to represent their friends at council meetings. Currently, they do not manage their own affairs or their own budget and this limits their influence on school improvement. Whilst provision for pupils' personal development is good, resulting in mature young people who behave well all through the day, there are missed opportunities in lessons and other activities for pupils to use their initiative. Lessons are well ordered and characterised by a thorough focus on learning key skills in literacy and numeracy. The most able pupils reach high standards owing to good teaching and learning. However, some lessons are not always sufficiently challenging for these articulate and confident pupils, mainly because they have too few opportunities to make decisions for themselves or to plan work with others.

Good provision in the Foundation Stage is underpinned by good care and support for the children. One parent wrote in appreciation, 'I am overwhelmed by the support and

encouragement my daughter has received to help her settle in.' Good levels of care and guidance lay behind the school's success. School walls are packed with vibrant photographs and examples of pupils' work. Resources are well organised, so that pupils can easily find what they need, and of good quality so that pupils relish using them. The Christian ethos emphasises pupils' responsibility to others, creating a safe and happy atmosphere. A trusting family ethos is well established and evident in lessons and at break times. From the Reception class to Year 6, pupils speak clearly about the need to help each other and make sure no-one is left out. There is strong support to help pupils achieve well. Challenging individual targets are set and shared with pupils and careful tracking of their progress ensures pupils build on their skills well. Currently, pupils are not fully familiar with the key steps that will help them improve their writing skills even further. Although targets are displayed in classrooms, pupils do not link these to their day-to-day work. This is partly because teachers' marking does not make clear to pupils what they have done successfully, to merit a house point for example, or how they could improve their writing even further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

When children start school in the Reception class, their skills and experiences vary widely, but overall are in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and reach standards that are above average by the end of the Reception Year. Plenty of singing throughout the day characterises the happy atmosphere. Children are confident and safe, and know exactly where to find the things they need because great care is taken to prepare resources well. Despite this there are few opportunities for children to select activities for themselves, mainly because adults tend to direct children, rather than encourage them to use their own initiative and develop their own ideas. Nonetheless, children thoroughly enjoy the activities provided. One boy happily explained, 'I like playing with the fort best!' Reception class children are well represented on the school council by one of their classmates, who makes confident contributions to the meetings. This is typical of the good personal skills children develop and the way in which they work and play very well with one another. Since the last inspection, difficulties linked to the school's Grade 2 listed building status and the restrictions of the small site have not helped governors in their constant efforts to resolve the issue of providing more outdoor space. However, the school does not always make the best use of the restricted space available, and this sometimes limits children's opportunities to make choices about their activities.

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

- Ensure that pupils throughout the school know the next steps for improving their writing skills.
- Improve opportunities for pupils all through the school to use their initiative in lessons.
- Ensure that middle managers are more involved in identifying the most important areas for improvement and planning how to tackle them.

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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	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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School, Staplefield, RH17 6EN

Thank you all for making me so welcome and helping me when I visited your school. Yours is a good school and you are making good progress because the teaching is good. This means that most of you are doing better than other children of your age. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to help you succeed at school. Your parents agree that it is a good school.

Here are the things that are best about your school:

- You are involved in excellent activities with other schools and organisations that help you do well in your work.
- You behave well all through the day.
- You are good at making suggestions and organising events to help the school, the local community and other good causes.
- You really enjoy all the extra activities and special days, especially sports clubs.
- Your parents support the school enthusiastically and this means you have good equipment such as interactive whiteboards in all your classrooms.
- You try to help one another in your lessons and when you are playing outside and this creates a happy family atmosphere.

There are a few things that could be even better. I have asked the school to make sure that you all know the next steps to help you improve your writing. I have also asked the school to encourage you to make more decisions about your own work. Finally, I have asked staff to check how well the school is doing more carefully so that they know exactly what needs to change to make the school even better. You can help by remembering your writing targets and thinking about them when you work.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Yours faithfully Liz Kounnou Lead inspector

28 March 2008

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Liz Kounnou  
Lead inspector