

St Mark's Elm Tree CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133301
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	316070
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Tony Kemp

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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Don Allday
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Hall
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	St Mark's Close Bishopton Road West Fairfield Stockton-on-Tees TS19 7HA
Telephone number	01642 580774
Fax number	01642 649144

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Inspection number	316070

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Mark's Elm Tree is an average sized school which serves a district which is socially mixed. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. On entry to the school their attainment is typical for their age. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Mark's Elm Tree is a good school. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and find it welcoming.

Pupils' achieve well. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception class, but satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 to reach average standards. Attainment in reading and writing is improving due to increasingly effective teaching in Key Stage 1, but more able pupils could achieve higher standards in mathematics. The results of the 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils were above the national average, reflecting the good progress made in Key Stage 2. More able pupils could achieve higher standards in English. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Strong Christian values ensure that pupils' spiritual and moral development are good. Pupils are well mannered and they enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance and behaviour are good and they know what to do to achieve healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the time they leave Year 6.

Teaching and learning are good overall. In most lessons, pupils respond with enjoyment to challenging work that is accurately matched to their ability. Teaching assistants provide good additional support where it is needed. Occasionally, the work set for the more able pupils is too easy and, on these occasions, they make slower progress than they should.

The curriculum is good; it is broad and balanced and matches the abilities and interests of most pupils. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their social skills and to share ideas with 'talking partners'. The curriculum is enriched well by a wide variety of visits, visitors and clubs.

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for all its pupils. 'meeters and greeters' welcome pupils each day. The children talk confidently about their targets. Pupils at risk of underachievement are accurately targeted for additional support.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has accurately identified the most important areas for improvement. The leadership team has a clear focus on monitoring pupils' progress and this is leading to higher standards. Governors are supportive of the school and are increasingly aware of their responsibilities with regard to raising standards.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children enter the Nursery with levels of development typical for their age. By the end of the Reception class, most children have made good progress, reaching and some exceeding the expectations for their age. The curriculum is good. Exciting activities are carefully planned to include a balance between adult-initiated activities and those chosen by the children. A strong teaching team provides good support and care and teaching is good. Outdoor provision has been improved since the last inspection and is now good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set more challenging work for more able pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Because children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, the great majority meet and some exceed the expectations for their age by the time they are ready for Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and standards are average. Standards are improving in reading and in writing but are not high enough for more able pupils in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Results of national tests taken at the end of Year 6 have been consistently above average for several years but the results in English have not been as strong this year because more able pupils did not do as well as they could.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the timely and effective interventions of teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupil's enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance, behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. 'You need to learn so you won't get a boring job,' said one pupil. Social skills and relationships are good. Pupils are helpful, well-mannered and caring towards each other; they feel extremely safe in school and incidents of bullying and racism are rare. Pupils are aware of how to keep safe on the internet and that it is not safe to talk to strangers or take medication or drugs unless they have been prescribed by a doctor. Although the school has a strong Christian ethos, pupils also learn about other faiths and their spiritual and moral education is well developed. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and respect property. Pupils' contributions to their community are excellent. From Year 1 upwards, two pupils from each class are selected as members of the school council and these pupils participate in the schools' decision-making and plans for improvement. An example of this is their planning for a running track on the field. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Gold Award. Pupils are aware that they need to exercise and eat a sensible diet to stay healthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are generally good and lessons have many strengths; for example, teachers have good subject knowledge and awareness of how pupils learn. Their use of questioning is particularly effective and motivates pupils to learn. The school has a new system for marking pupils' work which gives the pupils effective guidance about how to improve. Pupils are aware of their targets and say that they find them helpful. Activities are interesting and are usually planned accurately to meet the needs of learners; however, in a small proportion of mathematics lessons in Key Stage 1 and English lessons in Key Stage 2, the work set is too easy for the more able pupils and this means that their progress is slower than it could be. Well-established routines ensure good order and behaviour and little time is wasted. Skilled teaching assistants are effectively deployed to provide additional support where it is most needed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which is broad, balanced and matches pupils' needs, abilities and interests. The school has a well-attended breakfast club and a morning 'wake-up and shake-up' programme. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their social skills and the school provides well for pupils' personal development. After-school clubs are well attended and the curriculum is enriched by a range of visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all pupils. A warm welcome from the staff 'meeters and greeters', await pupils as they arrive in school each day. They feel safe and use the school's 'Listening Box' if they are worried about anything and know that an adult will talk to them about their problems. Most pupils have personal targets pasted into their books and the monitoring of their progress by the staff has a positive effect on their learning. Pupils at risk of underachievement are targeted for additional and effective support from teaching assistants. Government requirements for safeguarding are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is good and the headteacher has accurately identified the key areas for development. She has established an effective leadership team which has a clear focus on monitoring pupils' progress and the action to take where improvements are needed. This action has had a good effect on overall standards in Key Stage 1, particularly in reading and writing, although it has been less effective in mathematics. However, the recent improvement clearly shows that the school has a good capacity to make further improvement. The school makes good use of challenging targets. Class teachers are given targets for improvement and receive training to help them to meet these targets. Governance is good and the governors are effective in their support of the school; they are aware of the school's performance and areas for improvement. The school actively consults parents on a range of issues. The vast majority are very positive about the school and find it welcoming. One expressed gratitude for the school's nurturing of her child, who has 'come on in leaps and bounds'.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	2
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 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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 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

1 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Elm Tree CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, Stockton-On-Tees,
TS19 7HA

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. Your good behaviour and manners were a credit to your teachers and to your families and you are to be congratulated for that. Thank you also for holding doors open for us and for helping us to find our way when we got lost!

We really enjoyed spending time with you and seeing you at work in your lessons. Some of you were confident in talking about your learning and you are doing well, particularly in reading and science. The work we saw, especially from the youngest and the oldest children, was good.

However, some children occasionally find their work in mathematics and writing too easy. Because of that, your school is going to provide you with work that makes you think and concentrate even more. You can play your part by continuing to listen well and by helping each other.

I know you are very proud of your school and I know that your headteacher and the staff are very proud of you. They try hard to give you opportunities and to help you learn in exciting and enjoyable ways. Remember to keep making those healthy choices and to stay safe. I wish all of you all the best for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy school for the remainder of the year.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Kemp

Lead inspector