

# St Mark's CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103836
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	322281
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	317
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Price
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2006
<b>School address</b>	High Street Pensnett Brierley Hill DY5 4DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 818935
<b>Fax number</b>	01384 818936

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

St Mark's CofE Primary School is situated in an area of significant disadvantage. The school proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. When children start school, their skills are very limited. The school is part of the Black Country Challenge, which means it has the support of a consultant helping the school to raise standards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

St Mark's Primary School is a welcoming, happy and inclusive school that provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The last eighteen months have seen a period of significant change at St Mark's, during which time the sensitive leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has helped to develop a tighter focus on raising standards. There are some clearly emerging strengths in aspects of current leadership and management that contribute to the school's sound capacity to improve. The role of subject leaders is developing; some subject leaders have a good grasp of standards in their subject and vigilantly monitor its delivery across the school. They are well placed to lead staff development and contribute to the school improvement plan.

Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, its quality is not yet consistent and it is stronger in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. For example, where teaching is not as effective, teachers' explanations lack clarity and the pace of lessons is not fast enough to accelerate pupils' learning. The school's system for setting realistic and challenging targets is grounded in detailed, accurate analysis and tracking of pupils' attainment and progress. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Methodical teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics has led directly to pupils making satisfactory and sometimes good progress from their relatively low starting points.

The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) and science is not as effective as that of reading, writing and mathematics. The school has examined the reasons for this and has implemented a new systematic approach to the teaching of these subjects, including improving scientific knowledge, increasing the range of investigative work that pupils encounter and broadening pupils' experience of new computer software. These initiatives are just beginning to show an improvement in standards.

The school's commitment to inclusion is seen through the provision of dedicated learning mentors, and the effective working relationships with outside agencies such as the local authority advisers. The consistent implementation of positive behaviour strategies and the safe haven provided by the 'safari' room allow pupils to deal with any worries or troubles. The school has a coherent, well targeted programme of appropriate identification and support for pupils who find learning difficult in English and mathematics.

There is an appropriate programme of personal, social and health education that helps all children to know how to stay safe and understand how to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils show an increased level of independence, and actively participate in activities to improve their school, reporting that they really value the work of the school council. Their personal and academic performance is underpinned by secure procedures for care, guidance, and support and a satisfactory curriculum.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children enter the nursery with skills and abilities that are very low when compared to those expected for three year olds. They make satisfactory progress, but their standards are still well below average by the time they enter Year 1. The welcoming atmosphere and well established

routines ensure that each child feels valued and this helps them to develop positive self-esteem. The outdoor area is used effectively to excite children and to provide a wide range of enjoyable activities to encourage physical and creative play.

The school has done much to improve the curriculum for the Foundation Stage, which now provides an appropriate balance between teacher directed and child chosen activities.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good in all lessons.
- Raise standards in science and ICT by ensuring a consistently high quality approach to the teaching of specific skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards remain well below average but are improving and achievement overall is satisfactory. The school's assessment information for the summer term 2008 shows that in each year group an increasing proportion of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1. Just over two thirds of the pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are currently working at the level expected for their age in English and mathematics. A weaker picture is evident in science and ICT, although pupils are beginning to make better progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the school make satisfactory progress because their learning is diligently monitored and intervention programmes help them to catch up if they fall behind. The introduction of specialist teaching programmes and the improvements in teaching for reading and writing have supported the raising of attainment across all year groups.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have respect for the views, values and beliefs of others, understand clearly the difference between right and wrong, and cooperate well in teams. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. They play together confidently and openly show sensitivity to the needs of others. Most pupils behave well in lessons so that others are not disturbed. Exclusions are still relatively high, but the school has effective procedures to re-engage these pupils in the school routines. Pupils enjoy all aspects of school, although this is not reflected in their attendance levels which are well below average. However, the school does all it can to encourage pupils to attend regularly. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring numeracy and literacy skills that will help them in later life. The recent and ongoing investment to improve resources for ICT is just beginning to have an impact on developing pupils' skills in using computers to enhance their learning and life opportunities in the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The classrooms are interesting places where pupils feel stimulated to learn. Most pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning, are interested and enjoy working productively in pairs or groups during lessons. Teaching is usually based on sound subject knowledge, and is appropriately challenging. Teachers keep a careful and up to date track of the progress pupils make, and match their planning and teaching accordingly. Occasionally, progress slows when the teachers' instructions are not clear enough for pupils quickly to get on with their work. Sometimes, pupils are not asked to complete enough work to ensure they make good progress. These weaknesses are particularly noticeable in Key Stage 2, and the school is suitably focused on improving the teaching of science and ICT. Teaching assistants are well deployed, providing unobtrusive and sensitive support for pupils who find aspects of learning difficult.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The promotion of basic skills in English and mathematics underpins the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and a significant amount of time has been allocated to these key areas of learning. Able pupils are benefiting from an increased awareness of their needs, with more challenging tasks provided. This is contributing to improved achievement for all groups. The school makes good use of a wide range of day and residential visits to support classroom teaching. A good range of sports clubs adds to pupils' enjoyment, but the number of other clubs on offer is limited.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Parents are pleased with the quality of pastoral care that the school provides. Safeguarding, child protection and health and safety procedures are secure and regularly reviewed. The arrangements for supporting pupils' academic progress are sound. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sensitive support. Appropriate programmes are provided so that they make the same progress as their peers. Marking and other feedback provides most pupils with a reasonable knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to move their learning forward. Effective systems now exist to track pupils' progress across the whole school. Teachers make appropriate use of this information to set specific targets for improvement that pupils understand.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 3

The headteacher, senior staff and governors are aware that the key to the next stage of improvement is to ensure that they maintain their frequent and robust checks on the work in classrooms to improve consistency in teaching in order to continue to accelerate pupils' progress. The system used to track pupils' progress is good and this enables the teachers to identify quickly any underachievement and take appropriate steps to bring pupils back on course to meet their targets. Well planned and effectively delivered support packages have mostly

eliminated weak teaching and directly led to the increase in the proportions of satisfactory teaching. Governors have their fingers on the pulse of the school and make informed decisions. They visit the school regularly, receive useful, relevant information and provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Primary School, Pensnett DY5 4DZ

You may remember that inspectors have been working with your teachers for quite a while. We have enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your work. We are pleased to tell you that your school is now satisfactory and no longer needs our special attention each term.

Here is what we found out on our recent visit.

- You make satisfactory progress in your work and your work is improving.
- You are polite and mostly well behaved.
- You tell us that you feel safe in school and enjoy the clubs and activities on offer.
- Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and give you work of the correct difficulty.
- Adults look after you well in school.
- All staff and adults are working hard to make the school better.

We have asked the school to do two things to improve it further.

- Make sure that all lessons are as good as they can be
- Improve your science and computer work.

You can help the school by making sure that you attend school regularly and continue to try your best.

We wish you well in the future.

Jacqueline Wordsworth Her Majesty's Inspector



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