

St Mark's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113843
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	325898
Inspection date	3 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Collard

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	416
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Andrews
Headteacher	Caroline Burn
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Talbot Village Bournemouth BH10 4JA
Telephone number	01202 512241
Fax number	01202 532584

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether pupils' progress has improved in writing, an issue identified at the last inspection, and whether the higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils are making the best possible progress
- whether pupils are making continuously good progress through each year they are at the school
- whether the leadership and management have taken the right actions to continue improving the outcomes for pupils.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, interviews with the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors, and discussions with pupils and staff. In the absence of the headteacher, the inspection was led by the deputy headteacher. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own self-assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average school serving its local area but with some pupils from further afield. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although there are just a few who are at an early stage of learning English. Children start part-time in the Early Years Foundation Stage and become full-time after a term in the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Through excellent leadership and management it has continued to improve from a strong position at the last inspection so that all pupils achieve excellently and leave Year 6 with exceptionally high standards. The very strong, effective and highly focused development of teaching, resulting in challenging and exciting lessons, ensures pupils make continuous progress through each year. Well above average proportions of pupils leave the school with the age expected level in English, mathematics and science and almost half are achieving the higher levels. Almost all parents appreciate this very strong provision for their children. One comment, among many, sums up the feeling: 'Nothing is too much trouble for anyone. There is such a happy yet well-disciplined atmosphere – all the children seem to love it here.'

The majority of children start in the Reception classes with the expected standards for their age but with good speaking and listening skills. They settle quickly and make exceptional progress. Standards by the start of Year 1 are above average and have significantly improved in early writing, reading and numeracy skills. Results from the Year 2 national tests indicate standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average and are likely to show another rise this year. This good rate of progress continues through Years 3 to 6. This is not only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but in other subjects and areas. These include art, for which the school has gained a national Artsmark award, music and the development of life skills such as enquiry, research and computer skills. Pupils leave the school as articulate and confident learners, full of questions and exceptionally well prepared for their future lives. In discussion, they are prepared to challenge each other's views, listen attentively to the answer and debate problems. As a result, relationships throughout the school community are very positive and their outstanding personal development helps ensure they behave brilliantly. Pupils have an excellent understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements. There are close links with the local church and links to other schools in Africa promoted by a teacher who worked there. Pupils have a very good understanding of different cultures, although their appreciation of how these cultures interact within our own society is less well developed. The school is rightly developing its community cohesion strategies to strengthen this understanding about global diversity so that it is at the same high level as local and national community links.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and the experienced and challenging governing body have been instrumental in driving forward the changes that have made the most difference. These have centred on establishing and identifying any pockets of underachievement, be it with pupils or in developing the expertise of staff, and providing the right levels of support to ensure this is eliminated. The extremely accurate self-evaluation procedures include all staff and governors so everybody knows exactly what the strengths and weaknesses are. From this, everybody helps formulate challenging plans for the future, which are carried out decisively.

The extensive assessment information is used very well to set challenging targets and to make all pupils and teachers accountable for achieving them. Group targets are referred to in planning, shared with pupils in lessons and in some cases displayed in books. Some, but not all, pupils help develop these. The pupils correctly identified that on occasions, they would like to take more charge of their own targets to help them move on quickly and so develop better independence.

Lessons are fun because high proportions are good and sometimes outstanding. All have the right ingredients to help move learning on at a pace and it is only when teaching is occasionally less dynamic in approach that the teaching is more predictable. Teachers try to encourage as much independent enquiry as possible. For example, in one design and technology lesson the teacher wanted to reinforce some key vocabulary and to allow the pupils to experience intricate practical work. Through making powered buggies, pupils discovered the effects of wire insulation on electrical current with minimal help from the teacher. Highly experienced teaching assistants support those with both physical and academic difficulties as well as helping support the potential 'high flyers'. Support for the small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English is equally strong. They soon feel part of the school, are able to communicate effectively and make the same levels of progress as their peers.

Pupils fully understand what it means to lead a healthy life. The school's own swimming pool is used through the year. Many pupils take part in sporting events and the recently introduced hot meals are encouraging both healthy eating and social interaction. Older pupils say they would like to refine the lunchtime provision and have a number of ideas about improvement. While these can be talked through in the school council, this body is run by a teacher rather than the pupils. However, through their active fundraising, pupils have shown that they are quite capable of taking on the responsibility for chairing and minuting meetings. Pupils have an excellent understanding about keeping safe. Recent pupil surveys suggests that they know who to talk to if they have concerns, and the programme for personal, social and health education encourages them to talk about feelings and relationships.

The curriculum is constantly being redesigned to make it more flexible and to better cater for individual pupils' needs. A recent development of the already well-embedded 'SOS' (Signs of Success) system allows teachers to discuss what it is that pupils are trying to achieve in any one lesson. It also provides pupils with an opportunity to measure their own performance. Pupils are encouraged to participate in many and varied activities both during the day and outside school. There is an extensive list of clubs, visits, visitors, projects and special themes, using a range of partnerships that fully support learning. A gifted and talented register has been developed and the pupils identified have the opportunity to take part in some extra and challenging activities such as residential weekends. They are being very well prepared to achieve at the highest level.

The many positive features of the school, fostered by the headteacher and senior team, demonstrate that this is a school with high potential and an excellent capacity to improve. This is best summed up a parent: 'My child absolutely loves school and is so motivated and inspired every day he attends.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

There are very strong induction systems to ensure children can settle quickly into school life. Even those who have only been at school for a short time socialise and interact well with each other and the adults. Attitudes towards learning are excellent. The very good planning means that teachers and adults provide the right opportunities to ensure a mix of directed or more formal activities as well as times for the children to play or explore ideas of their own. All adults have specified roles and work together effectively. The spacious accommodation, both inside and out, is used to the full and the extensive resources are easily accessible. Displays help pupils with their early reading and writing skills and they are taught to be independent such as by arranging their own time. Continuous and accurate assessment ensures that any difficulties are

quickly supported to enable all children, whatever their ability, to make the best possible progress. Transition arrangements into Year 1 have been refined and the best practices developed for these younger children continue as they move through Key Stage 1. By the time they leave the Reception classes, the children's excellent achievement ensures that standards are above average and everybody is exceptionally well prepared for more formal work within the National Curriculum. This all gives them the best possible start to their education. St Mark's is proud to be the only school setting with the fully accredited status of the Bournemouth Quality Standards for Early Education and Care.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build upon the work to develop pupils' independence in Years 1 to 6 by providing them with more opportunities to take charge of their own learning and allowing them to suggest improvements such as through the school council.
- Develop pupils' understanding of how different traditions and cultures within our own society interact with each other.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 February 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Mark's C of E Aided Primary School, Talbot Village BH10 4JA

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed hearing all about your school and seeing you at work. I am sure you will not be surprised that we have said that you go to an outstanding school. As I promised some of you, I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us that you thought you got on very well with your studies. We agree. You are making excellent progress from the time you start. Most of you are not only leaving in Year 6 with the standards expected of you in English, mathematics and science but nearly half are exceeding this. You are being very well prepared for your future lives.
- From what you said to us we know you behave extremely well and really do get on well with each other. We thought you were very careful playing in the snow but it was good that you also had the opportunity to enjoy it safely.
- You also told us that you thought you were looked after well and that the staff helped you a lot. We agree with this. You are taught exceptionally well; most lessons are fun and there are lots of practical things to do. All this is making you think hard and helping you to use what you have learnt in new situations.
- The work you do in different subjects is very varied. We can see that there are many budding artists, musicians and sportspeople. We have also said that we think you know about many things from around the world. We have asked your teachers to try and find ways that you can find out more about the many different cultures in our country
- There are so many things to do during school and through the after-school activities we wondered how you fitted it all in. Your sporting success shows how well you know about keeping healthy and fit.
- Your headteacher and her staff have a very clear idea about what needs to be done to make things even better. We have asked that you can be allowed to help this process by taking more responsibility for things such as the school council. We know that you have started to do this already by suggesting what can be done with the playground and raising money for different charities. Keep it up.

Finally we wish you all the best for the future. Keep helping everybody at your school to make sure your school remains one of the best.

Yours faithfully,

David Collard

Lead Inspector