

# St Mark's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

---

Unique Reference Number	131450
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	328593
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

---

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	527
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Williams
Headteacher	Mrs S Galloway
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 February 2006
School address	Danebury Road Hatch Warren Basingstoke RG22 4US
Telephone number	01256 346111
Fax number	01256 346121
Email address	sue.galloway@stmarkscofe.hants.sch.uk

---

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	10–11 February 2009
Inspection number	328593

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 21 lessons, three assemblies and held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of the leadership and management team, the chair of governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, the tracking and analysis of pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings and 138 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- outcomes for different groups of pupils, in particular higher attainers, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds
- how well informed pupils are about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- provision for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs
- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how successfully the school has developed leadership and management at all levels (including governors).

## Information about the school

St Mark's is a larger-than-average school which has expanded from two to three classes in each year group. Because it not yet full to capacity and there is movement within the catchment area, the number of pupils joining or leaving the school during the course of the year is higher than in other schools. Up to 90 children are admitted each year into the three Reception classes which form the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most children attend one of the wide range of pre-school providers in the area before joining St Mark's, including the Dandelions pre-school which shares the same site but is separately managed.

The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those eligible for free school meals are below average but increasing. About one in eight pupils are from minority ethnic groups, typically from a White background other than British or of Asian heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the number with a statement of special educational need, is close to that found nationally. Most commonly these pupils have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties; the school makes specialist provision for some of these pupils through the 'O Zone'.

# Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

St Mark's is a well-led, caring and effective school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their time at St Mark's. In fact, when asked, they really struggle to think of any way that the school could be improved!

Academically, progress has improved since the last inspection, so that by the time pupils leave Year 6 standards are above average. Importantly, the school has addressed issues raised in the previous inspection report about higher-attaining pupils not reaching their potential. By improving the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and raising the expectation of what pupils can achieve in lessons, it has successfully increased the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. As a result standards of attainment are above those found nationally in English, mathematics and science. Pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. This is because the school has a thorough knowledge of the level each pupil is working at and takes account of its good understanding of their individual needs to plan appropriate activities. Pupils themselves are much better informed as to how well they are doing than at the time of the last inspection. All lessons have a clear objective so that the pupils know what they are learning, and teachers share with them how they will know they have been successful. Pupils' work is regularly marked and teachers often make detailed comments. The best marking provides specific guidance on how to improve and what the pupil needs to do next.

At the heart of the school's caring ethos is a holistic approach to nurturing pupils' all-round development and a commitment to a safe, inclusive and cohesive community. This has been reinforced by the recent adoption of the 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' initiative based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the school is beginning to integrate into all aspects of its work. Already there are signs of success as pupils are becoming familiar with the rights they have and appreciating that these come with responsibilities. This includes a respect for other cultures and religions. Equally, the work is helping to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for those pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Behaviour across the school is generally good. Pupils show maturity and tolerance and understand that on occasions some pupils find it more difficult to control themselves and that therefore different rules may apply to them.

The caring ethos is equally as strong in Early Years Foundation Stage where provision for children's personal development is good. Overall, outcomes are satisfactory rather than good because staffing difficulties have meant that provision for children's learning and development is not consistently good. This was not picked up early enough by the school. There are also some weaknesses in the use of the outdoor area and in assessment.

As the school has grown, it has successfully developed its leadership and involves staff at all levels in closely monitoring key aspects of the school's work and planning for improvement. Regular classroom observations give an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders know where the best practice is and use it effectively as a model to bring about improvement where it is needed. Middle managers use assessment and tracking data successfully. However, the same rigour is not applied to monitoring and evaluating all other aspects of the school's work, including reviewing how well it is promoting equality of opportunity and community cohesion, with senior leaders sometimes relying more on instinct than fact. Nevertheless, the proven track record of improvement since the last inspection and the carefully targeted plans to ensure the school continues to move forward demonstrate that the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes by the end of Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - implementing plans to develop the use of the outdoor area across all areas of learning
  - ensuring that assessments identify more clearly what the child needs to learn next
  - regularly monitoring the quality of provision for children's learning and development.
  
- Governors and senior leaders should improve their understanding of how well the school is doing in all aspects of its work, in particular by:
  - implementing plans to formally evaluate the effectiveness of statutory policies by the end of the spring term 2009
  - ensuring that they regularly review how successful their work is to promote equality of opportunity and community cohesion.

## How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2
---

Teachers cultivate pupils' love of learning through their own enthusiasm in lessons and through the good relationships they develop with the pupils. Pupils respond by working hard and being attentive in lessons. Work is generally well planned to meet the needs of groups and individuals. Teaching takes account of what pupils already know and the skills they have developed to ensure that those capable of higher achievement are suitably challenged. Indeed, these pupils are well aware that their teachers are keeping a careful check on how well they are doing, will quickly pick up if the work has been too easy for them one day and increase the challenge the next!

Lower-attaining pupils make good progress because work is carefully tailored to match their needs. Teaching assistants provide good support for them in lessons and through additional teaching where necessary. Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties are well supported by a careful blend of teaching within the specialist provision, the 'O Zone', and integration into mainstream classes. This is underpinned by good strategies to manage behaviour and diffuse difficult situations, ongoing assessment of their needs and close work with other agencies to ensure these pupils' needs are met.

Standards for pupils in Year 2 have improved year-on-year since the last inspection. Test results in 2008 were just above average, with boys doing particularly well compared with boys nationally. Data for pupils leaving Year 6 in 2006 and 2007, together with unvalidated test results for 2008, show that standards are consistently above average and that the very large majority of pupils make two National Curriculum levels of progress during Key Stage 2. These high standards, together with the opportunities pupils have to develop life skills such as team-working, ensure they are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## The quality of the school's work

Lessons are thoughtfully planned, interesting and well organised. There is a good combination of direct teaching, probing questioning, motivating activities and carefully targeted support for groups and individuals. Explanations are clear and often enhanced by the use of interactive white boards to demonstrate concepts visually, for example the subtraction of decimals. Occasionally whole-class sessions become too broad to maintain high levels of interest. Teachers skilfully question the pupils to make sure they fully understand what they are learning. Where necessary, they provide more detailed explanations or work through additional examples to ensure pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher

---

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

worked for a few minutes with one child to help him understand how to place words with the same initial letter into alphabetical order. As a result, his progress accelerated and he was able to work successfully on the task of preparing a glossary of sporting terms.

The curriculum is broad, lively and enhanced by a wide range of after school clubs and visits to places of interest. It clearly motivates the pupils and cultivates their enthusiasm for learning. In discussion they are eager to reel off the many interesting and exciting activities they have done, ranging from science experiments with yeast, to geography fieldwork in Bournemouth and exploring Indian art. Pupils particularly enjoy music. This was very evident in an excellent music lesson in Year 4, where the teacher's enthusiasm and good subject knowledge resulted in rapid progress in the pupils' performance with both glockenspiels and untuned instruments. Pupils are developing good skills in information and communication technology (ICT). When they have access to computers in other subjects, it improves their learning and gives them opportunities to consolidate their ICT skills, for example in putting together presentations. However, this additional access is limited.

Support for pupils is good when they join the school, when they move to the next key stage and when they transfer to secondary school. Some parents expressed concerns that they do not get enough information about their child's progress. However, inspectors found that there is a good range of support and guidance including detailed annual reports for each pupil, regular well-attended parents' evenings and annual curriculum presentations.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders set clear and appropriate priorities for the school's work based on careful analysis and evaluation of data from monitoring. They involve all staff in the process of bringing about improvement and hold them to account through performance management. Consequently the teaching of writing has improved, progress in English is now good and the number of pupils reaching the higher level is much higher than found nationally. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and are using a similar approach to bring mathematics up to the same high standard. They acknowledge that the monitoring of mathematics needs to be as frequent as that in English, to check that planned strategies are being consistently implemented in advance of evaluating the impact on pupil outcomes at the end of the year.

Governors are instrumental in the drive for improvement by challenging senior leaders if they do not feel high expectations are being realised. They actively seek the views of parents and take action where this raises issues, for example in

introducing weekly 'open-door' sessions with the headteacher to improve communication. However, governance remains satisfactory because their plans to be fully involved in evaluating the school's work and to move, in their own words, 'from reviewing to setting the direction of the school' are still at a relatively early stage. Key policies are in place to ensure equality of opportunity and the 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' initiative is promoting the principles of community cohesion, but procedures to formally evaluate the effectiveness of these aspects of the school's work are at an early stage.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. There are clear procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils, backed up by regular training. The school ensures that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults who work or volunteer in school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	3
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents appreciate the well-planned induction to school, saying it keeps them well informed and makes them feel welcome, as well as ensuring their children settle quickly. In the morning children come into school happily, secure in the comfort of well-established routines and good relationships with staff. Provision for their welfare is good. Procedures are in place to ensure that all children are well cared for and protected, with each member of staff taking responsibility as the key person for named children. Behaviour is generally good and the children learn to be independent and to take responsibility for themselves, for example by selecting from the menu for lunch or deciding when to have their snack. Staff absence during the last year has meant that the provision for children's learning and development is not consistently good. Regular planned and incidental observations record clearly what children can do, but they tend to focus on literacy and numeracy skills and children's personal development rather than taking account of all areas of learning. They do not identify what the child needs to learn next so that the staff can ensure that the planning of activities provides sufficient challenge.

Activities are linked to a weekly theme and take account of the children's interests. Indoors, there is a good balance across all the areas of learning and a mix of activities led by an adult and opportunities for children to choose their own activities.



Adults often lead or join in activities and develop children's learning well through talking and asking them questions. Equally there are times when such opportunities are missed. The outside classroom is not effectively used to promote children's learning. Plans are in place to ensure that activities cover all the areas of learning, but there is too narrow a focus on physical development.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3

## Views of parents and carers

This was a no-notice inspection, so parents were invited to respond to questionnaires in a very tight timescale, effectively overnight. In spite of this, just over one quarter returned them, which is very close to the average response rate for primary schools. The majority of parents are completely satisfied with the school. However, others raised concerns, in particular relating to the progress their child is making, the information they get as to how well their child is doing, how they can support them, and about behaviour in school. Inspectors made sure that they investigated these matters further and have included their findings in the body of the report.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

03 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Basingstoke  
RG22 4US

It was lovely to meet you when we came to visit your school. Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us in lessons, around the school and in the special meetings we had. You really helped us to find out more about your school. I am sure you will not be surprised to find out that we decided that your school is a good one. You told us many positive things about it. These are the things that really impressed us.

- You enjoy learning and work hard because lessons are interesting.
- The standards you reach by the end of Year 6 are better than in a lot of schools. This is because most lessons are good and the teachers carefully check how well you are doing each term.
- Behaviour is generally good. You appreciate that some pupils sometimes find it difficult to control their anger and need extra help.
- The work you are doing on 'Rights, Respect and Responsibilities' is helping you understand the role you play in your school community and out of school. It also helps you to respect other people's cultures and religions.

Of course there are always things that can improve and we discussed these with your headteacher before we left. To help the school become even better, we have said that the headteacher and other staff should:

- make sure that the youngest children get the best possible start to their education
- check carefully how successful they are in making sure that everyone in school is treated fairly and learns to live and work together with people from different backgrounds.

Once again, thank you and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alison Storey  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).