

# St Mark's Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102645
<b>Local Authority</b>	Merton
<b>Inspection number</b>	335941
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Natalia Power

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>	Nursery
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	223
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Canon Stephen Coulson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Marion Standing
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	St Mark's Road Mitcham CR4 2LF
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of children. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's plans, its self-evaluation, the data it has collected on pupils' progress, and the minutes of the governing body. They considered the responses in 67 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- the impact of leaders and managers in ensuring that teaching and learning are of high quality and consistent from class to class
- the impact of measures taken by the school to improve attendance
- the learning and progress of different groups of pupils.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Around two thirds of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with pupils from Black African heritages forming the largest group. Over half of pupils have a first language other than English, and those at an early stage of learning English most commonly have Arabic, Somali and Tamil as their mother tongue. More pupils than usual have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils have a range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school part-way through the year is higher than usual.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

St Mark's Primary School provides a good quality of education.

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are generally below those expected for three-year-olds. Pupils higher up in the school continue to make good progress, leaving school with results which are broadly in line with those in the country as a whole.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well overall. All groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. This is because their progress is tracked effectively and the information is used well to support their needs.
- Pupils who join the school part-way through the year are very well supported. They settle down quickly and make good progress in line with others.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are proud of their school and mindful of its values. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. They feel safe in school.
- Teaching is consistently good and leads to good learning. Teachers match work accurately to the capabilities of the pupils. However, marking varies in quality and does not always provide sufficient guidance on how pupils can improve.
- The curriculum has a strong focus on basic literacy and numeracy, and provides exciting enrichment activities through excellent partnerships, for instance with pupils from an independent school.
- The care and support offered to all pupils, and in particular vulnerable children and those with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, is outstanding. The excellent partnerships with external agencies benefit these pupils.
- As a result of energetic measures taken by the school, attendance has improved and is now average, after being well below average for a number of years.
- The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory, but does not fully develop pupils' awareness of the wider world beyond their school and local community.
- The headteacher and her team are ambitious for the school and have put in place systems which are bringing about improvements. For example, their effective tracking systems quickly identify pupils' capabilities.
- Leaders, managers and governors have an accurate understanding of their school and plan well for the future. They have successfully tackled the points for development from the previous inspection. For example, their improved classroom

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monitoring has resulted in teaching and learning which is now consistently good. As a result, the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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

- Introduce a clear marking policy across all subjects, to improve the consistency and quality of marking, and to ensure that all pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Promote better community cohesion by ensuring that pupils engage fully with the wider community beyond the school, and by evaluating the impact of measures to achieve this.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Through consistently good teaching, pupils learn well and make good progress from starting points which are generally below those found in the country as a whole. They enjoy learning and achieve well overall. Results in national tests tend to fluctuate because year groups are small and the performance of very few pupils can make a big difference to overall outcomes. Over a period of several years, however, pupils attain standards which are broadly average. The excellent support provided for pupils who join part-way through the year, some with little or no English, enables them to catch up quickly and make good progress. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also excellent, enabling them to make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from Black African backgrounds, achieve well in line with pupils generally.

Good progress was seen in lessons throughout the school, with work tailored well to pupils' capabilities so as to provide a good level of challenge. The school's innovative streaming of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 according to ability rather than age helps pupils to learn at a good and appropriate pace. Pupils understand and like the streaming system, recognising that it helps teachers and their assistants to match tasks to their abilities. In one typical English lesson for lower-ability pupils from Years 4 to 6, all were involved in a competition to find words containing the 'magic 'e''. Pupils enjoyed this activity, and the lesson provided them with a good level of challenge.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their spiritual and moral development is particularly strong. They understand and take to heart the uplifting messages written up around the school, and this is largely because they have helped to compose them. Pupils feel safe and report that there is hardly any bullying and that any incidents are quickly dealt with. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They understand the school's reward systems, and aim to improve their manners in order to sit at the 'golden table' at lunchtime. They are extremely knowledgeable about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and are willing to embrace it to the extent of encouraging their families to provide them with healthy lunch-boxes. Pupils contribute well to the school community, for example by playing an active part in the school council, and they understand and care about their local area. Pupils'

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attendance is average, and has considerably improved since the last inspection. Their command of basic skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of schooling.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and this leads to pupils making good progress and enjoying learning. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well by using the school's reward systems consistently. They use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to think for themselves. As a result, the pace of learning is brisk and pupils' attention rarely flags. Teachers are ready to celebrate success, even, on occasion, by encouraging classes to stand up and dance when pupils do particularly well. Teachers are popular with the pupils because, in the words of one, 'They care about the children in the school.' Teaching assistants give effective support to a wide range of pupils, including those with additional needs, and their support is an important contribution towards enabling pupils with varying capabilities to make good progress. Teachers use the assessment information about pupils to provide them with tasks which have a good level of challenge and are matched well to their needs. However, the school recognises

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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that the quality of marking is inconsistent from class to class and from subject to subject, and this means that pupils are not always clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is good overall, and the range of activities to enrich the basic curriculum is exciting and wide-ranging. The clubs, trips and visits to places of interest are appreciated by the pupils, and they enjoy travelling within London by public transport. Music is a strength of the curriculum, and pupils are encouraged to play instruments and to sing in the choir. The curriculum has a good focus on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, and this enables them to make good progress in these subjects. The school recognises that not enough is done to promote learning in some other subjects, for instance in history.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well and given very strong support. Vulnerable children are given outstanding care. The school knows their needs and goes to great lengths to provide for them. Its excellent partnerships with a range of external agencies enable pupils with language and learning needs to make good progress in line with others. One parent of a pupil with physical difficulties commented, 'The school has been very accommodating towards my child, checking on what extra equipment and care he needs.' The school takes highly effective steps to promote regular attendance, and pupils proudly show visitors the award for the 'most improved school in the borough for attendance'.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The impact of the headteacher in ceaselessly striving to improve the school is best summed up by one pupil, who commented, 'Mrs Standing makes us feel proud of this school.' Ably supported by her governors, she has created a strong team of managers and staff who share her ambition and determination to make the school outstanding. Based on good self-evaluation, and improvements since the last inspection, the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Leaders and managers and governors promote equality of opportunity successfully, ensuring that all pupils, whatever their background or needs, make good progress. They ensure that safeguarding is effective, and that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. The school's relationship with parents is good and improving. Parents are welcomed into the school, not just to contribute, but to learn new skills, and in turn to help their children. The school works in

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excellent partnership with a range of external agencies to promote pupils' well-being and to provide the highest quality of care and support. Pupils particularly value their Friday afternoon enrichment activities provided by boys from an independent school, and these raise pupils' aspirations and encourage them to aim high.

The school tracks pupils' progress well, using the information to set them challenging tasks that are well matched to their capabilities. This enables all pupils, whatever their needs, to make good progress. Leaders and managers monitor the quality of classroom teaching successfully and, as a result, it is consistently good. The school's planning is rigorous and is successfully based on a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school, support it well and are ready to hold it to account.

Leaders and managers have created a cohesive school with a strong sense of its importance in the local community. As yet, school leaders do not sufficiently develop pupils' global links with the world beyond the school or sufficiently evaluate the impact of its measures to promote community cohesion.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

### **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with social, language and number skills below those expected for their age. Their progress is regularly assessed and this information is used to plan for them and to support their individual needs successfully. As a result, children make good progress. In some areas they reach expected levels by the end of the Reception Year, such as in their personal and social qualities. In other



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areas they even exceed expected levels, such as in knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development. However, the school recognises that children in the Reception year do not visit Year 1 enough to prepare them for a smooth transition. Children are happy in the Early Years Foundation Stage, because good partnerships with parents are established early and maintained well. Adults promote children's welfare well. They provide firm but kind support and, as a result, children develop good social and emotional skills. There is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. The outdoor areas are safe and attractive, with a wealth of exciting activities to stimulate children's curiosity. These activities take good account of the children's own interests and nurture their sense of wonder at the world around them. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is effective in planning the curriculum and meeting children's learning needs.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

The large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires or spoke to the inspection team are happy with the school. Parents feel that the school has a warm, friendly atmosphere. They value the care and support provided by the staff and feel that the school is improving. A small minority of parents expressed minor concerns about the school. There was no specific trend or pattern to these issues.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 223 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	75	16	24	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	67	20	30	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	60	24	36	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	57	28	42	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	54	28	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	48	29	43	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	52	24	36	1	1	3	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	42	33	49	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	37	37	55	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	42	32	48	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	40	34	51	0	0	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	30	45	33	49	0	0	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	58	25	37	0	0	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Primary School, Mitcham, CR4 2LF

You may remember that three inspectors recently visited your school and talked to some of you.

This is what we found out. Yours is a good school. It helps you all to achieve well and to enjoy your learning. This is because the adults plan well for your individual needs and teach you well.

We noticed how well you behave in lessons and in the playground. You told us that everyone at the school is kind. One pupil said, 'If you're new, the children come up to you and play with you straightaway.' This is a lovely thing to do, and we believe that your thoughtfulness towards others is no accident. It is the result of a great deal of planning by those in charge. For example, we learned that you share in setting the school's values, such as 'We listen and care' and 'We're always learning'. This is an excellent feature of your school, and there are others, too, such as the way you understand so well what it means to live a healthy life.

Your school takes excellent care of you and supports you extremely well, working with a wide range of people from outside the school to give you a good curriculum and exciting extra activities, and to provide additional help for those who need it.

Your school's motto is 'To be the best we can be'. Those in charge believe in this aim, and plan and work every day to bring it about. We have asked them to make sure that all your work is marked carefully, so that each of you knows exactly what to do to improve. We know how much you do to make your school a successful part of the local community. Now we have asked those in charge to make sure that you reach out to the wider world outside the school as much as possible.

You can all play your part by working hard and making sure that your name always goes on the 'green slip' and never on the red! We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Natalia Power

Lead inspector

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