

St Mark's Voluntary Aided Ecumenical CofE/Methodist Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 109273 |
| Local Authority | North Somerset |
| Inspection number | 337257 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 May 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Colin Lee |

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 | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 416 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Derek Irwin |
| Headteacher | Helen Bath |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 May 2010 |
| School address | St Mark's Road Weston-super-Mare BS22 7PU |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and observed 15 teachers and two teaching assistants. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, the school development plan, lesson and curriculum planning and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Questionnaires from 155 parents were returned and scrutinised by the inspection team, who also spoke to a number of parents and carers.

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

- the way that the school is working to improve progress by boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, and progress in writing throughout the school
- the effectiveness of strategies for helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how staff with whole-school responsibilities for subjects or areas of work monitor outcomes and provision.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Although the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average the range is wide, including physical disability, pupils on the autistic spectrum, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes. Many aspects of the school's work have received awards and it is recognised as one of the country's leading practitioners in the areas of e-safety and Settling in New Parents.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Pupils say it is a special place and the longer inspectors stayed in the school the more they realised the pupils are right. Staff and pupils are very proud of the school and parents and carers are very pleased with the high quality of education it provides. The headteacher's inspirational leadership provides a drive and ambition for improvement that is shared by all. At the heart of the school's work lies the Christian ethos and the outstanding care, guidance and support given to each pupil. These, together with outstanding teaching, help all pupils to attain high levels of achievement in their academic and personal development.

Pupils make excellent progress from the moment they start the Early Years Foundation Stage, where their attainment on entry is broadly at expected levels, but with weaknesses in language development. All aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding by the time they leave the school. Academic attainment is also very strong. Pupils leave the school with attainment well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. There is also sufficient evidence in lessons observed during the inspection to show that pupils' attainment is similarly high in information and communication technology (ICT) and music. In contrast, although attainment in other subjects is at least good, the proportions attaining higher levels are not quite as high as they should be. A reason for this is seen in teachers' planning, where there is not always enough challenge provided for the more-able pupils.

Senior leaders have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to identify key areas for development. This has enabled them to bring about important changes that have significantly improved the school. Nearly every aspect of provision, and all the pupils' outcomes, have improved since the last inspection. For example, initiatives to improve writing have been very successful. These have raised attainment by all pupils, especially boys in Reception and Years 1 and 2 which was a group whose writing had weaknesses in the past. The wide range of improvements confirms that there is an outstanding capacity for improvement in the future.

The school's promotion of equal opportunity and readiness to tackle discrimination are outstanding and lead to very harmonious relationships and the outstanding achievement by all groups of pupils. Impressive aspects of their personal development include their excellent behaviour and the way that pupils care for one another. Their moral code is very strong and they place great emphasis on showing kindness. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe at school. They know that they are valued and contribute much to the school community. They love physical activity and have an excellent understanding of its importance and of the need for healthy eating as the basis for a healthy lifestyle.

There are outstanding features in leadership and management at all levels that have had a considerable impact on all aspects of provision. These include the highly successful drive to improve teaching and learning. Teaching has many outstanding features and senior leaders recognise that the next priority is to refine the use of assessment in Years 3 to 6 in order to increase the accuracy of tracking pupils' progress. The governing body contains a significant number of governors who are new to the role but who are already having a good impact on the quality of the school's strategic planning. Procedures for ensuring that important responsibilities, such as rigorous safeguarding and promoting community cohesion, are well established and effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning still further by ensuring that:
 - the more able pupils have work that is sufficiently challenging in subjects other than English and mathematics

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Consistent features in every lesson observed during the inspection were pupils' unbounded enthusiasm for learning, their excellent behaviour and the high levels of cooperation when required to work in pairs or small groups. Such positive attitudes are a key reason for their outstanding achievement and high levels of attainment. The ability to work collaboratively has a marked effect on pupils' quality of learning as well as their social skills. 'It's your turn now' was frequently heard in a Year 3 group doing a numeracy activity on the interactive whiteboard. Two boys in a Reception class had independently chosen to work at the sand tray and one said to the other, 'Shall we work together?' A Year 6 pupil explained how her writing was going to be better than the day before thanks to the comments made by a classmate on how it could be improved.

Pupils start school with attainment at expected levels and they leave with standards that are well above average. The proportion reaching high levels of attainment for their age gradually increases as pupils move up through the school. This means that Year 6 pupils are on track to meet the challenging end-of-year targets that have been set for them. All groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well in relation to their prior attainment in literacy and numeracy. These include the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, whose outstanding quality of learning owes much to the high quality of support from teaching assistants. Any emerging differences between boys and girls in the younger age groups are quickly eliminated by making learning activities exciting for all.

Pupils achieve exceptional maturity in their personal development. This was exemplified when pupils were asked if they feel safe in school. Included in the many reasons why they do indeed feel absolutely safe was the response of one pupil who explained that the school had helped them to understand what he called 'the dangers of social

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networking sites on the internet□.

Pupils are very eager to contribute to school life and appreciate the fact that their views are sought and acted upon. Those with specific responsibilities, such as school councillors, peer mediators, book buddies or play leaders, carry out their duties very conscientiously. Pupils have an excellent understanding of other cultures and faith groups. The many outstanding outcomes in academic and personal development, and experiences of enterprise activities, mean that pupils are totally prepared for the next stage in their education and have many skills to help their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching□s beneficial impact on learning is very evident and reflects the successful emphasis the school has given to monitoring and professional development. This has encouraged teachers to introduce a range of new strategies into their lessons which have improved the quality of pupils□ learning and brought a sharp focus on making sure that pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn in each lesson. Pupils make very good use of the opportunities they receive in every lesson to evaluate for

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

themselves how successfully they have achieved the range of learning objectives. Teachers have good awareness of pupils' progress in lessons and plan learning activities in literacy and numeracy that generally match pupils' abilities well and help to maintain that progress. Checking progress over time is very effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 where the progress is constantly checked by teacher assessment. In Years 3 to 6, teacher assessment has not been so regular and there has been more reliance on using formal tests twice a year. New approaches to assessment have recently been adopted in order to provide more information about short- and long-term progress. These now need to be embedded.

The curriculum has been developed successfully to incorporate progressions in skills in each subject. This helps learning to build well on what has been learned before. Much of the curriculum is imaginatively planned, with strong emphasis on practical activity and first-hand experiences. A focus on writing, with initiatives to link pupils speaking and writing skills, has successfully raised boys' attainment in writing. The curriculum as a whole is used well for development of basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Much thought is also given to how learning activities can be organised to have a positive effect on social skills. Special events such as International Week and Multicultural Week have had excellent impact on pupils' cultural awareness. Further curriculum development is planned and evaluation of which approaches have greatest impact on pupil outcomes is seen as the basis for that development. Some teachers link subjects together in a topic approach and pupils like this arrangement because, as one pupil said, "We learn lots of interesting things in topics, and it is fun."

The outstanding quality of pastoral care, guidance and support impacts very well on pupils' personal development, particularly social skills. The needs of the significant number of vulnerable pupils are fully met and there is extra help and support for these and all other pupils whenever they need it. The school works very closely with families, providing support for any parents or carers seeking help or advice. The parent support adviser is an invaluable source of guidance in such circumstances and the advice given has helped many parents and carers and alleviated concerns.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Governors, senior leaders and staff work closely together to monitor the impact of measures introduced for school improvement. Such measures are the product of

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ongoing, rigorous self-evaluation by all members of the school community, including the pupils. The result has been improvement in virtually every aspect of the school's work since the previous inspection. This includes the effectiveness of subject leaders who are well informed by thorough monitoring of outcomes and provision that leads to detailed planning of actions necessary for further improvement.

Together with the excellent way in which equality is promoted and discrimination tackled, school leaders also show strong commitment to promoting community cohesion. There is ongoing monitoring of the community cohesion plan by a committee that includes pupil representatives. The school recognises, however, that pupils' understanding of other communities in the United Kingdom is not as strong as other aspects of their cultural development.

There are excellent links with parents and carers who appreciate the guidance on how they can help their children's learning and the approachability of staff. The development of excellent home-school links is one of many key partnerships that have been used to enhance the quality of pupils' learning and their well-being. The school makes the most of church and other local community links, as well as its work with other schools and professional organisations. The benefits are two way, for the school's practice in areas such as the 'Settling in New Parents' project is exemplary and has been disseminated nationally, as has the promotion of e-safety

Governors have effective strategies to make them fully informed about the life of the school and they contribute knowledgeably to planning for school improvement. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and that staff are well trained and vigilant in their attention to health and safety, risk assessment and child protection issues.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with attainment at the expected levels in all areas except language development, which is below that expected. Outstanding provision and leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage help children to progress from the moment they start school. The stage leader has promoted a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff. This helps children's progress to be outstanding and the vast majority of children end the year above average in nearly all areas of learning. Every opportunity is taken to promote language development and this results in exceptional progress in speaking, listening and reading. This brings both boys' and girls' writing up to average levels by the end of the year. In all respects, children experience a rich curriculum that, together with outstanding teaching, results in children loving every minute of being at school.

Staff work very closely together, showing exemplary levels of concern for children's welfare. They all carry out ongoing assessment of children's learning by recording observations of their successes and areas for development. This information is used very well to plan activities tailored to the needs of individual children. Children quickly develop the confidence to work independently. They are inquisitive and love learning new things. They talk excitedly about their discoveries. This all stems from learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors being well planned, with an excellent balance of activities led by adults and activities that children initiate for themselves.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team are very happy with the school and are extremely supportive. They say their children enjoy school and they particularly appreciate that they are kept safe and progress well. Inspectors were very impressed by pupils' enjoyment of all that they do at school and saw that safety is an absolute priority. Many of the questionnaires had additional, positive comments. Concerns that have been raised are specific to individuals for the most part, although several parents wish to receive more specific and more frequent information about their children's progress. The inspection has identified assessment of attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6 as an area for improvement. This

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would provide teachers with a more accurate picture of pupils' progress that should meet parental needs in the future. The very few concerns raised about behaviour were not borne out by evidence gained during the inspection. The behaviour observed in classrooms, assemblies and at play and lunch times was excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mark's CofE/Methodist Ecumenical 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 155 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 416 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 99 | 64 | 54 | 35 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 115 | 74 | 37 | 24 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 58 | 37 | 88 | 57 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 78 | 50 | 69 | 45 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 95 | 61 | 55 | 35 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 76 | 49 | 67 | 43 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 86 | 55 | 63 | 41 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 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) | 79 | 51 | 64 | 41 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 76 | 49 | 70 | 45 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 64 | 41 | 76 | 49 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 66 | 43 | 75 | 48 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 93 | 60 | 56 | 36 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 101 | 65 | 48 | 31 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 51 | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 41 | 42 | 10 |
| Secondary schools | 8 | 34 | 44 | 14 |
| Sixth forms | 10 | 37 | 50 | 3 |
| Special schools | 32 | 38 | 25 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 12 | 43 | 31 | 14 |
| All schools | 9 | 40 | 40 | 10 |

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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.



6 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England/Methodist Ecumenical Primary School,
Weston super Mare BS22 7PU

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. We think your school gives you an outstanding education. This is what we particularly appreciated.

- You make outstanding progress and your work is of a high standard in English and mathematics and is showing good improvement.
- You are taught excellently and teachers plan a good curriculum that gives you many exciting learning opportunities.
- Your behaviour is excellent and we saw how well you all look out for one another. This makes your school a very happy place that everyone enjoys going to.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- You are superb at carrying out responsibilities, such as being a school councillor or play leader, and this makes an excellent contribution to the life of the school.
- You say you feel very safe in school - this is because all the adults do an outstanding job in looking after you and making sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The headteacher and many other teachers provide outstanding leadership and management and all the adults work well together to help the school to improve.

We have asked the school to do one thing to help make it even better.

- Those of you who find learning easy need to have more challenging work in subjects other than literacy and numeracy.

We hope you will carry on working hard, enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Mark's Primary School to be an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Colin Lee

Lead inspector

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