

St Mark's Church of England Primary Academy

Albert Road, South Norwood, London SE25 4JD

Inspection dates

7–8 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is well led by the headteacher, who is determined to give every pupil the best possible opportunity for success. This ambition is shared by all the staff in the school.
- The leadership team has brought about improvements in teaching and consequently pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, senior leaders recognise that the teaching of reasoning in mathematics needs further development.
- Leaders have acted to ensure that most pupils enjoy the opportunity to read widely, although some pupils have not yet established a passion for reading outside of their lessons.
- The school offers an enriching curriculum which pupils enjoy. However, the progress pupils make in some subjects is not monitored as rigorously as in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and enjoy the many roles they are given to contribute to their school. They know how to be safe and are keen to look after each other.
- Pupils behave well, guided by the Christian values they learn in school. They move around the school sensibly and are kind to each other.
- The school understands well the needs and circumstances of its pupils. Leaders make sure they receive the support they need to be successful.
- Parents are very positive about the school's work, especially the advice they are given to support their child's learning. They appreciate the safe and happy environment that the school provides.
- Both the local governing body and the academy trust provide support and challenge to school leaders, which has enabled the school to improve rapidly.
- Early years provision is good and children settle in quickly and make good progress, especially in their personal development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the monitoring of the progress pupils make in all subjects is as strong as the monitoring that takes place in English and mathematics.
- Further develop the teaching of mathematics so that pupils develop further their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Continue to enhance the reading curriculum to ensure all pupils develop a passion for reading.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has created a community with high expectations. Her ambition and vision are shared by all the staff in the school. This has led to considerable improvements in the progress pupils make and in their behaviour.
- The impact of each teacher's performance on the learning and progress of pupils is monitored rigorously, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders' checks on teaching in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are not routinely as thorough. Targets are set that help pupils to make good progress in all subjects, and leaders have taken action to remove any weak teaching which prevents pupils from achieving this. As a result, teachers are reflective and strive to improve the impact their teaching has on pupils' learning.
- Leaders at all levels are aware of the strengths and weakness in the school. They monitor the impact of actions and have precise plans in place to ensure further improvements in the school.
- Leaders take advantage of all the support they receive from the local authority, the diocese and the trust, which has also enabled the school to make rapid improvements. For example, the headteacher and the newly appointed regional director for the trust work closely together to strengthen leadership at all levels.
- The curriculum is well planned and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils. It is organised into relevant themes that interest and excite the pupils. Woven into the themes are good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, where pupils are also taught about British values. This was seen during the inspection when teaching was linked to the theme of the general election and so pupils developed a real understanding of democracy. The curriculum in all year groups supports pupils' creativity and they are given many opportunities to work with artists; for example, the whole of Year 3 created their own Iron Man sculpture linked to their work in English.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to diminish differences in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Where differences still exist they are closing rapidly as a result of strengthened teaching. The school has embraced the trust's '11 before 11' initiative which ensures that all pupils, including those from a disadvantaged background, have the opportunity to participate in enriching experiences such as camping out under the stars.
- Sports funding has also been used effectively to ensure that more pupils participate in sporting activity and make healthy lifestyle choices. The school has employed a sports coach who provides a wide range of activities during the school day and after school. Pupils have benefited from the increased access to swimming in all year groups that is supported by the fund.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides strong leadership. There is a clear vision about how the school can meet the needs of these pupils so pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good, and sometimes rapid, progress.

- Parents are unreservedly positive about the school. They are pleased with the work of the staff and the safe environment that the school provides. One parent spoke for many by saying 'words cannot express how much this school cares for pupils'.

Governance of the school

- Governors and leaders are ambitious for the school. They want it to be a 'beacon in the community' and understand the role the school plays in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education as well as in becoming responsible members of the local community.
- Governors visit the school regularly and participate in the wide range of monitoring activities that take place systematically in all areas of the school's work. As a result, governors have a clear and accurate overview of the school's performance. This information is used effectively to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are well-developed child protection procedures in place that are followed rigorously and understood by all staff. Staff and governors benefit from regular and detailed training that complies fully with the latest safeguarding guidance. Effective systems are in place to support early identification of, and rapid response to, concerns. Staff work diligently with families, as well as other agencies in social care and in the community, to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Leaders have ensured that there is appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and their families. The staff who support these pupils are particularly effective. This is because they know the pupils and their families well. They offer good support for pupils' well-being and encourage regular and prompt attendance at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan activities that meet the needs of pupils, and as a consequence, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have developed very positive relationships with pupils based on a good knowledge of pupils' individual strengths and interests. Classrooms are calm and friendly places where pupils can be seen enjoying their learning experiences. Teachers often use effective questioning to make pupils think about their learning and explain their answers. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on what they have learned.
- Effective planning between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils receive high-quality support when they find learning challenging. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a positive contribution to the progress pupils make in lessons.
- Leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics has resulted in pupils making good progress in these lessons. However,

not enough teaching in these subjects enables pupils to make substantial progress. There are elements of outstanding teaching in the school. When teaching is at its strongest pupils are given the opportunity to explain and apply the skills they have learned and as a result they achieve or exceed age-related expectations.

- Reading has a high profile in the school and is taught well. Teachers' strong phonic knowledge is used to plan interesting activities for younger pupils. As a result, they quickly learn to use the letter sounds to work out unfamiliar words. Teachers plan guided reading sessions which are developing pupils' ability to make inferences so they are able to deepen their understanding of what is happening in the books they read. Leaders are aware that although teachers are developing topics to encourage pupils to enjoy reading for pleasure, this still needs embedding across the school.
- Teaching in subjects across the curriculum does not develop, consolidate and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding as securely as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils are well taught by teachers and teaching assistants inside and outside the classroom and they make good progress.
- Pupils' achievements in writing are improving over time. Evidence in pupils' books shows that the teaching of writing incorporates their spelling, grammatical and punctuation skills effectively. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to undertake extended pieces of writing across the curriculum to improve their writing skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school curriculum focuses on developing pupils' speaking skills. During the inspection, adults were seen modelling how to communicate effectively; as a result, pupils can express their ideas and opinions articulately, while being respectful to others.
- In all year groups, pupils are encouraged to be active members of the school community by taking on a wide range of responsibilities; for example, pupil champions in each class act as positive role models to others. During collective worship pupils of all ages are encouraged to contribute either by helping or presenting. This was seen during the inspection when a Reception child read in Portuguese in front of the whole school.
- Leaders, together with the school's attendance officer, have worked hard to ensure that attendance has improved significantly. This is a reflection of how much pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance in the school is now above average. The school promotes the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Pupils and parents were seen running to school during the inspection to ensure that no learning time was lost.
- Leaders and staff are vigilant about ensuring pupils are safe and know how to be safe. Through the well-planned curriculum pupils develop an understanding of how to stay

safe in a range of situations. Pupils told an inspector that they feel safe at school, and know how to stay safe online when using a computer.

- The overwhelming majority of staff, and parents who completed the Ofsted Parent View survey and contributed towards the free-text service during the inspection, agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at this school.
- Parents are very positive about how the school looks after the well-being of their children. One parent commented on how the school has 'gone above and beyond' to ensure that her children's needs have been met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. From the minute pupils enter the school in Reception they are reminded about Christian values, which encourages pupils to behave well and be kind to each other.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. This was seen both inside and outside of lessons. In lessons pupils work hard and listen to the adults. On occasions, when pupils are given work that is not sufficiently challenging, a small minority of pupils engage in low-level disruptive behaviour. Pupils play well together at break and lunchtime. They have a range of resources available to them to encourage positive play. Many pupils enjoy the structured activities provided by the school's sports coach.
- Pupils say they know how to behave and enjoy the many rewards they are given for behaving well.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and if it does happen it is dealt with by adults. They feel that people know how to treat each other and the overwhelming majority agree with the view of one pupil that 'everybody is nice to each other here'.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historically, the progress that Year 6 pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages. However, improvements in the quality of teaching mean that current pupils are now making good progress from their starting points. This is confirmed by the quality of work in pupils' books, which is often of a high standard, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- In Reception children enter with skills that are significantly lower than is typical for their age. Through accurate assessment, leaders quickly identify the children's needs and develop appropriate learning experiences for them. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points and some make rapid progress. The number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is increasing over time, and in 2016 was in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 is increasing, and in 2016 was above the national average. This is as a result of phonics being taught more systematically and pupils being able to use their phonic skills accurately when reading books. Current pupils' attainment in phonics is also on track to be above the national average in 2017.

- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was at the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and was above the national average for disadvantaged pupils. The current cohort in Year 2 is achieving well and school analysis shows that these pupils are on track to attain in line with or slightly above the national average in all subjects by the end of the academic year. As a result, pupils are well equipped with the academic skills to be fully ready for the next stages of their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are well supported and now make good progress from their starting points. This is because the school has used pupil premium funding effectively to provide both additional learning and well-being support. This ensures that all disadvantaged pupils are academically and emotionally ready to learn. Additionally, the most able disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and consequently more are achieving the higher standard.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school identifies and assesses pupils' needs accurately and ensures that the support provided improves their learning. As a result, these pupils are currently making good or rapid progress from their individual starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in St Mark's Reception are happy and confident. The broad and enriching curriculum, as well as the good teaching, means that most children thrive during their time here. Their transition into Reception is well managed and planned so children are quick to settle and make progress in their learning. The education they receive in St Mark's Reception prepares them well for the start of Year 1.
- The leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader and the teaching staff demonstrate an accurate understanding of the provision needed for the children. This ensures that learning opportunities are appropriate and secure children's progress in all areas. For example, the teaching staff recognise the limited progress some children made previously in writing. Consequently, there is an emphasis on encouraging children to write when they are learning both indoors and outdoors. Teachers and teaching assistants provide a language-rich environment, with many opportunities for writing that is linked to children's learning experiences. As a result of this, all children are making good or rapid progress in their writing.
- Teaching in Reception ensures that children make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. They are encouraged to be inquisitive and much learning is initiated by the children themselves. The teacher is very responsive to children's interests in learning. For example, the children's enthusiasm for the 'garden centre' has resulted in adults continuing to develop learning opportunities around this theme.
- Staff work hard to engage with families. Parents are regularly invited into school to celebrate their child's progress. Parents are encouraged to drop in whenever they wish so that they can be involved in their child's learning. Regular parent workshops, for example in how to support your child's phonics development, are very useful to the parents that attend them.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making rapid

progress in Reception. The support they receive from additional adults and the teacher means they are able to learn independently and learn with other children.

- The children enjoy a safe indoor and outdoor environment with a variety of activities to support their progress. However, leaders do not routinely check how much time children spend on particular activities during the course of the day, which means some children may not be accessing the full range of learning activities.
- Safeguarding in Reception is effective. Adults are vigilant about ensuring that children are safe and well cared for. As a consequence, children are happy and enjoy their time in Reception.

School details

Unique reference number	141119
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10031685

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mrs Anne Tattersall
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Wilson
Telephone number	020 8654 3570
Website	www.st-marks.academy
Email address	office@st-marks.croydon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Mark's Primary Academy is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan is below the national average.

- The school meets the current government floor standards for primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- The Ofsted inspector observed learning in every class and attended a whole-school assembly.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were looked at throughout the inspection.
- Pupils were heard reading and were questioned about their reading habits.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the regional director of the trust and representatives from the governing body.
- Pupils were spoken to informally and formally during lessons and at lunch.
- Inspectors considered the responses from the pupil questionnaire, staff questionnaire and Parent View.
- During the inspection the school's website and a variety of documents including governor's minutes, behaviour logs and the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Helena Mills, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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