

St Mark's C of E Primary School

Manor Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5EA

Inspection dates

1 to 2 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes are not good enough. Too many pupils are making insufficient progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have recently made a number of changes to improve the way reading, writing and mathematics are taught across the school. While these changes are beginning to impact positively on pupils' progress, too many gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge remain.
- The leadership team does not yet consistently make an impact on raising standards. Improvement plans do not focus sharply enough on developing the skills of leaders.
- Frequently, teaching does not adequately challenge pupils in their learning. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are inconsistent. When teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils, some pupils lose concentration and disrupt learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge that pupils' progress has not always been good enough.
- Leadership in the early years is good. Children make strong progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. As a result, this group of pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships between school staff and pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are given many opportunities to develop their emotional resilience and well-being.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders by ensuring that:
 - the skills of all leaders are sufficiently developed so that they can fulfil their roles with consistent effectiveness
 - all leaders are clear about school priorities and understand precisely what needs to be done to bring about rapid improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress in key stage 1 and key stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, including the most able, are sufficiently challenged in English and mathematics
 - making sure that teachers provide adequate opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to develop the more complex skills in reading, for example inference and deduction
 - ensuring that teachers plan effectively to address gaps in pupils' knowledge in writing, so that pupils can independently apply the core skills expected for their age
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to apply their fluency skills in problem-solving and reasoning tasks, so that pupils' understanding is deepened in mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment to inform their planning so that lessons routinely meet the needs of all pupils in English and mathematics.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by eradicating low-level disruption in lessons.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In the past, leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching and learning closely enough. They have not been quick enough to address the decline in pupils' outcomes. This has led to some pupils making limited progress and not achieving the expectations for their age.
- Not all leaders have the necessary skills and expertise to support the headteacher in making rapid improvements. Some leaders are overly generous in their evaluations of the quality of teaching and the rates of progress pupils make. In addition, some leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of the precise actions that are needed to bring about rapid improvement.
- In recent months, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have taken action to address school weaknesses. A range of new approaches to the teaching of English and mathematics have been implemented. Some improvements have started to impact positively on pupils' progress. However, it is too early for these improvements to affect outcomes in key stage 1 or key stage 2.
- Middle leaders have recently received high-quality professional development in English and mathematics. As a result, they have acquired strong expertise in these subjects. However, they have not yet had sufficient time to influence and improve practice across the whole school.
- Leaders and governors have been proactive in seeking the advice and support offered by the local authority. Advisers have provided school leaders with useful training and advice. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching in the school and the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress because the SENCo has high aspirations for them. Procedures to support their learning are well developed. The next step is to ensure that procedures are clearly disseminated to all staff so that there is a consistency of approach across the school. The specialist provision unit has had a positive impact on pupils' engagement in learning and the progress they make in speech and language over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and often outperform their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders and governors have a strong understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the school. The pupil premium grant is allocated effectively to help disadvantaged pupils overcome barriers to learning, as well as to develop their social and emotional resilience.
- Leaders monitor the impact of the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium. In PE lessons, pupils are given the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sporting activities, such as hockey, table tennis, swimming, cricket, golf and dance. The use of a specialist teacher has provided professional teaching for pupils and has developed the expertise of staff.

Governance of the school

- Governors know that standards have not been good enough since the last inspection. Recent reorganisation of the structure of the governing body has resulted in improvements in governors' effectiveness. They know what is working and what needs to improve. They routinely hold the headteacher to account for pupils' achievement.
- Governors visit the school often and know it well. They work alongside the headteacher to monitor the impact of new initiatives. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. They work hard to support senior leaders, and their ambitions for the school are high.
- Governors take their responsibilities seriously and regularly check the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures. Governors monitor the work of leaders to ensure that pupils in the school are safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records of recruitment procedures and checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school are thorough and accurate.
- The headteacher provides all staff with annual training about how to safeguard and protect pupils. Safeguarding policies and procedures are very well embedded and all adults have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. As a result, adults are confident to report any concerns they may have about pupils' well-being. When required, the designated safeguarding leaders are quick to make referrals to other agencies. This ensures that pupils and their families receive the help they need in a timely manner.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say that adults listen to them if they have a concern or worry. Pupils told inspectors that they trust the adults in their school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. Teaching does not meet the needs of all groups of pupils consistently well or challenge them sufficiently. As a result, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics are not always developed robustly enough.
- Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks in English and mathematics shows that the recently implemented approaches to teaching are beginning to help pupils catch up. However, these changes have not been in place long enough to fully overcome previous weaknesses in pupils' progress.
- When teaching is stronger, well-planned and structured activities enable pupils to develop and deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, teachers do not always use assessment information accurately or effectively to identify how well pupils are learning. As a result, planning does not always meet the needs of all groups of pupils, and this hinders pupils' progress.

- The teaching of reading is improving and is helping pupils who have fallen behind catch up to where they need to be. Pupils enjoy reading and are particularly enthusiastic about the new school library. The library is a well-organised, inviting space and pupils make good use of the wide range of texts now available to them. Teachers ensure that books are well matched to the needs of pupils. Pupils in key stage 1 use their phonics skills well to help them read unknown words. However, pupils' higher-level comprehension skills in key stage 2 are not yet always developed well enough, and some pupils have limited understanding of advanced vocabulary.
- Teachers do not always focus precisely enough on teaching pupils the core skills in writing. This has led to many pupils making limited progress. Too many pupils are working at a standard that is below where they should be for their age.
- Leaders have recently made changes to how phonics is taught in the early years and key stage 1. This has significantly improved pupils' phonics skills. They are now increasingly more able to apply their phonics knowledge to independent writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is not consistently good. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that pupils are not routinely given enough opportunities for mathematical problem-solving or reasoning about number. As a result, some pupils do not make sufficient progress. Where pupils are given these opportunities, they are beginning to catch up to where they should be for their age.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed by teachers and provide effective support for pupils' learning. They skilfully question pupils, guiding and challenging as needed. This often helps pupils successfully to complete the tasks set for them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are extremely positive.
- Leaders are passionate about the personal development, safety and welfare of the pupils in their care. They have considerable strengths in ensuring that the pastoral needs of pupils and their families are well provided for. St Mark's is an inclusive school that offers effective support for its pupils. As a result, pupils settle well and feel happy and safe.
- Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the work of the school. They particularly praised the work of leaders and teachers in providing additional support, nurture and care for their children.
- The headteacher is passionately committed to the personal development and welfare of pupils. Leaders and staff provide highly effective support for pupils who face challenging personal circumstances. This ensures that vulnerable pupils have the skills needed to play an active role in day-to-day school life.
- Pupils are happy at school and keen to learn. They are self-assured and willing to talk to adults about their learning. Pupils are proud of the work they produce. They are enthusiastic about sharing their ideas and thoughts. Most pupils are confident to share their thinking in class lessons and during assemblies.

- Pupils understand what bullying is and say that bullying does not happen in their school. They state that this is because teachers are quick to deal with such incidents. Pupils care for each other and value the friendships they have in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Leaders have recently implemented a new policy to improve pupils' behaviour. Systems and procedures are now much more consistent. This has resulted in a sharp reduction of behaviour incidents in school. However, some pupils' behaviour is still too variable.
- When teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils, some pupils disrupt classes by talking over the teacher or distracting others. Pupils told inspectors that this interrupts their learning. They also said that some pupils misbehave at playtime, but that adults deal with unwanted behaviour issues swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils' attendance has improved. In 2018, pupils' attendance was below the national average for primary schools. Leaders have evaluated systems to manage attendance and have made improvements. Current pupils' attendance is closer to the national average.
- Fixed-term exclusion rates have been above the national average for the past two years. Leaders have put effective measures in place to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2018, pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average for primary schools at the expected standard or higher.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in phonics by the end of the year was below average. In 2018, it declined further. Changes to the way phonics was taught have started to improve phonics knowledge for current pupils. This is leading to improvements in pupils' reading and writing in key stage 1.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 who achieved age-related expectations in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average for primary schools. Pupils' achievement in reading was close to the national average. However, pupils' achievement in writing declined in 2018 and was well below the national average. Currently, pupils are making better progress in writing and are beginning to catch up.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is not yet good enough in key stage 2. This is because some teachers do not routinely provide the most able pupils with tasks that are sufficiently challenging. As a result, the most able pupils make less progress than they are capable of in some classes. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who exceeded age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average.
- In Year 2, more pupils achieved the higher standard in reading than other pupils nationally in 2018.

- Current disadvantaged pupils achieve well. This is because leaders ensure that this group of pupils have access to a wide range of additional support that is targeted accurately for pupils' individual needs. The school's assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils often make more progress than their classmates. Work in books confirms that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Most pupils with SEND achieve well. This is because the SENCo tracks each pupil individually and regularly reviews planned intervention. The SENCo provides regular training for teachers and teaching assistants so that pupils with SEND get effective support with their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children in the early years join the school with levels of development well below those typical for their age. In 2018, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was only slightly lower than the national average. This indicates strong progress from their starting points.
- Children have a good start to their education. Relationships between adults and children in Reception are strong. As a result, children have positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well and engage effectively with the activities planned for them. The early years team has high aspirations for all children to achieve well.
- Staff know the children well and are kind and nurturing. As a result, children are happy and confident to explore and investigate the many learning opportunities planned for them.
- The early years is well led and managed. The high-quality training that staff receive enables them to provide exciting learning opportunities that capture children's imagination. Leaders' evaluation of the early years provision is accurate.
- Leaders have implemented robust systems for tracking children's progress in Reception. As a result, teachers plan effectively for the needs of individuals, and most children make good progress. However, the most able children are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Children enjoy learning and playing independently. They demonstrate good collaboration and communication skills. Inspectors observed children playing confidently in the 'garden centre' role-play area. Children took on the roles of shopkeeper and customer, and used their knowledge, developed in mathematics, to buy seeds and flowers.
- The learning environment is bright and stimulating. Resources are well organised and well cared for. The classroom spaces are arranged into themed areas that offer interesting activities, for example construction toys, painting, and opportunities for physical development. There are designated areas where children are able to enjoy and develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children in the early years is effective. All staff receive regular training and have a clear understanding of the most recent safeguarding information. All adults are vigilant and know how to identify safeguarding concerns.

School details

Unique reference number	114545
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10058192

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Keating
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Fendley
Telephone number	01273 605 588
Website	www.stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Email address	janevendley@stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 September to 1 October 2015

Information about this school

- St Mark's is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is much higher than the national average. The proportion with education, health and care plans is also much higher than the national average.
- Almost half of the pupils in the school are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium funding. This proportion is much higher than the national average.
- The school is part of a city centre partnership and, through this, receives support from Roedean school.

Information about this inspection

- Jointly with senior leaders, inspectors observed learning in all classes and evaluated pupils' work in a range of subjects. Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read and reviewed the school's assessment information.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils at breaktime to gather their views on the school.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of the school's documents and policies, including behaviour and attendance information, records of visits carried out by the local authority, minutes of the governing body's meetings and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body. Members of the inspection team held meetings with a range of middle leaders. Inspectors considered five responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to a parent survey conducted on behalf of the school.

Inspection team

Luisa Gould, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Claire Martin-O'Donoghue

Ofsted Inspector

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