

Inspection of a good school: St. Mark's C of E Primary School

Brantridge Lane, Staplefield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6EN

Inspection date:

27 March 2024

Outcome

St. Mark's C of E Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive and feel safe. They are happy and have warm relationships with nurturing staff. Every morning, pupils enjoy being greeted by the school dog, 'Clementine'. Pupils behave well in lessons. They play kindly with each other during breaktimes. Older pupils enjoy supporting younger ones and like sharing books together in the garden area. The 'sports crew' helps younger pupils to learn and play games.

The school has high expectations about pupils' academic work. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They are rightly proud of the work they produce and want to do well. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils make the most of the range of different opportunities provided. They enjoy learning about the local and wider global community. For example, in geography they learn about the characteristics of different countries.

Outdoor learning takes a high priority at this school. Pupils enjoy many activities in the enchanting woodlands set within the school grounds. They learn about the different tree species in 'forest school'. Pupils say that visiting the woodlands helps to ignite their imagination and creativity. They use this when they write stories, for example.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is well designed and meets pupils' needs. Key knowledge that pupils need to learn is clearly set out in each subject. The school has identified the key subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to acquire as well. For example, when pupils read history books, they are confident in understanding terms such as 'artefact' and 'invasion'. The well-sequenced curriculum enables pupils to build on what they have learned before so they can apply their knowledge as they progress through the school.

The school has ensured that there are careful checks on what pupils already know and understand. Staff regularly revisit past learning to make sure that pupils have remembered it well. Any gaps in pupils' learning are identified quickly. This enables pupils to achieve well across a range of subjects. Pupils with SEND do well. Their needs are identified quickly, often in the early years. Staff work well, sometimes in partnership with specialist external agencies, to ensure that these pupils receive the help that they need. When necessary, staff adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND are able to learn confidently. In most subjects, the school has ensured that staff have high-quality, subject-specific professional development. This solid subject knowledge enables teachers to plan purposeful activities so that pupils make strong connections in their learning. However, in a few subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is still developing. This means that, in these subjects, pupils do not achieve as highly as they could.

Reading is a top priority. Pupils become confident and fluent readers quickly. As soon as children start in Reception, there is a focus on making sure that they develop their communication and language skills. Staff are well trained to teach phonics effectively. Pupils at an early stage of learning to read, including those with SEND, learn letter sounds and how to blend them together to make words. Pupils' reading books are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. The well laid out library areas entice pupils to read more challenging books and write book reviews. Staff provide effective support for any weaker readers who need to catch up.

Pupils' attendance is a high priority for the school. There is a careful analysis of attendance and school staff are quick to follow up on any absences. Pupils behave well. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Children in the early years settle well into school life and learn to follow routines quickly. They enjoy learning through well-planned activities, for instance they develop their understanding of nature when planting flowers.

The school provides well for pupils' broader development. Pupils understand democratic principles and the rule of law. They learn about the diverse nature of society. Pupils are very appreciative of the wide range of clubs and visits that the school offers. These develop their talents and interests. For example, staff recently arranged for a solar-panelled car to visit the school so that pupils could examine how it worked. Pupils enjoy raising funds, such as through selling cakes. Music takes a high priority and the choir recently sang at an event at the O2.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Staff say that they enjoy working at the school. They are positive about their workload and the concern leaders have for their well-being. Governors provide effective support and challenge and know the school well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the implementation of the curriculum is still developing. Teachers do not always have the subject expertise to ensure that pupils develop a depth of understanding. The school should continue to provide staff with further subject-specific training in order to embed pupils' understanding more securely so that they make even better progress.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	126015
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10296334
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Denise Harber
Headteacher	Laura Kelsey
Website	www.st-marks.w-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Chichester. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of 2025.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and about their learning and looked

at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard some pupils read to a trusted adult. The curriculum in other subjects was also considered as part of the inspection.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and a range of other staff. There was a meeting with members of the governing body. There were discussions with a representative from the local authority and the diocesan school adviser.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, records of governance, documentation relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey and Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies. An inspector spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Cathy Reid

Ofsted Inspector

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