

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England Aided Primary School

Queen's Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6DU

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this nurturing and welcoming school. They are happy and attend regularly. Pupils demonstrate the school's 'Circle Values' of challenge, integrity, respect, community, love and equity in every part of their school day. They are pleased to be part of the school community and enjoy 'living and learning together'.

Pupils behave well. They are keen and enthusiastic to learn. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They reflect the high expectations that the school has for them. Staff develop caring and trusting relationships with pupils. Pupils feel important and valued. They know that they can talk to any adult in the school if they have a worry. This helps them to feel safe.

The school encourages all pupils to develop a sense of responsibility. Pupils can apply for 'jobs' through the school's 'Job Junction'. Pupils are proud to be school ambassadors, house captains, reading buddies and junior road safety officers. They take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils value and appreciate these leadership opportunities.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of carefully planned activities. Their education is enriched through creative opportunities, such as a trip to the local theatre. Here, pupils learn how each part of an orchestra works together to make music. Pupils enjoy the clubs on offer, for example archery, hand bells and 'imagination club'. These help pupils develop new skills and interests.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. It has given careful thought to the subject content and what pupils learn. The curriculum starts in the early years. It is effectively sequenced so that children in Reception develop strong foundational knowledge. This knowledge builds step by step as pupils move through the school. Teachers make careful links between subjects, which enable pupils to apply their knowledge across the curriculum. This helps strengthen pupils' understanding.

Subjects in the wider curriculum are taught through engaging and exciting projects. These projects encourage pupils to be creative, curious and explore ideas. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 designed and created their own 'bug hotel'. They explored the type of materials to use, knowing that their choice must be 'stiff' and 'stable' to withstand the weather outside. Pupils investigated different joining techniques and the most effective tools to complete the task to the highest standard. Pupils take great pride in the work they produce.

Reading is prioritised across the school. Staff make reading interesting by choosing high-quality texts for pupils in lessons. They read enjoyable books with pupils at the end of every day. This encourages pupils to develop good attitudes to reading and view themselves as readers. Children practise letter sounds as soon as they join the

Reception year. This helps most pupils become confident readers as they move through key stage 1. Teachers carefully check pupils' understanding. If pupils start to fall behind, they receive extra help. However, occasionally, books that pupils read do not always connect closely enough to the sounds that they have been taught in lessons. This means that a small number of pupils are not practising the sounds they need to read fluently. Work is already underway to ensure that all pupils' reading books match the sounds that they know.

The school is a highly reflective one. For example, staff recognised that pupils in key stage 2 were not making enough progress in mathematics. As a result, the school implemented a more systematic and consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils are now achieving very well in this subject.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are included in all areas of school life. Their needs are identified precisely, and they are supported well across the curriculum. Pupils with SEND access the same broad and ambitious curriculum as their classmates. They have positive attitudes to their learning and achieve well overall.

The school environment is calm and purposeful. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils conduct themselves in lessons and around the school sensibly. They play well together during breaktimes. Pupils receive strong pastoral support if they need it. The school has effective strategies to ensure pupils come to school every day. If needed, pupils and families receive effective support to improve pupils' attendance.

Pupils' personal development is carefully considered and planned for. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They are taught to act with integrity and take personal responsibility for their actions. Through religious education and collective worship, pupils are taught about a wide range of faiths, beliefs and celebrations. This helps them respect differences in the world and celebrate the cultural things they have in common.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always check closely enough that pupils are reading books with the sounds that they have been taught and need to practise. Consequently, a small number of pupils are not learning to read as well as they could. The school should provide training for staff to help them match books with the phonics knowledge that pupils are taught when they are learning to read. This will provide pupils with the support they need to become confident and fluent readers.

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	116389
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10321833
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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Hartley
Headteacher	Victoria Ellis
Website	www.stmarkscofe.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 July 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- This is a smaller-than-average, Church of England primary school within the Diocese of Guildford.
- The school's provision for religious education and collective worship was last inspected under section 48 of the 2005 Education Act in November 2016.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and extended leadership team, including leaders responsible for SEND, pastoral development and safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education and design technology. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils reading, visited phonics and reading lessons and spoke to pupils about their reading opportunities in school.
- A wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan, were reviewed by the inspector.
- Inspectors held discussions with governors, a member of the diocese and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/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.

Inspection team

Luisa Gould, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gary Regan

Ofsted Inspector

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