

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School

High Street, Pensnett, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 4DZ

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The care and well-being of each pupil is at the heart of this school. All staff know the pupils, families and community extremely well. They want all pupils to succeed, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and they do.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe. Pupils, parents and staff made comments such as, 'I love learning', 'We are all part of St Mark's family' and 'I love this school'.

Pupils are welcoming, friendly and polite. Behaviour in lessons and at other times of the day is good. Learning happens without disruption because pupils see learning as important.

Pupils know what bullying is. They do not feel it is a problem in school. Staff sort out any issues or worries they might have.

The school motto, 'Loving, growing and succeeding together', reflects the way the school works as a community. The school celebrates the success and contributions of its pupils through the 'A Team' and 'Stars of the Year' celebrations. Pupils told inspectors about the excitement in families when a positive letter arrives in the post. They say how much they enjoy celebrating their own and others' achievements.

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

Since his appointment, the headteacher has rightly taken steps to bring about improvements to the school environment and to teaching.

Leaders have designed a high-quality curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils. It is highly ambitious for all. Leaders plan the curriculum in a logical way. They carefully plan for language and vocabulary development. Leaders rightly identified the subjects to develop first. They wanted to ensure pupils could read and write well and develop secure mathematical skills. The curriculum for these subjects is now strong. Senior leaders monitor their plans to ensure the intended learning is secure. As a result, pupils learn well. For example, pupils could remember their learning on The Great Fire of London in detail. However, in some subjects, school-specific plans are less well developed. Subject leaders are at an earlier stage in reviewing plans to ensure they deliver the required learning.

Encouraging a love of reading is vitally important to leaders. The teaching of phonics and early reading is a strength of the school. All staff across the school have received training in the teaching of phonics. As a result, consistent practice supports all pupils, including those further up the school who may struggle. Pupils' enthusiasm for reading shines through. Pupils who find reading more difficult were keen to tell inspectors how much they loved books and stories.

Children learn happily in Nursery and Reception. The environment is attractive, busy and purposeful. Children have settled quickly and know the routines and high expectations. Language development is a key focus. Leaders know that learning starts as soon as a child enters Nursery. Leaders comment, 'We sow the seeds for the next seven years.' They want, however, to do more. They aim to influence children's learning opportunities from birth. The pre-school parent workshop happening during the inspection was an example of this. Pre-school children, babies, parents and school staff were together playing and learning. The school has set in place further workshops to support parents and their children. Parents welcome this.

Pupils with SEND receive strong support. Leaders quickly and accurately identify pupils' needs. The school is inclusive. Staff adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. This helps pupils succeed and feel positive.

Leaders want pupils to broaden their horizons. Pupils feel inspired by the attractive displays of famous people, past and present. They like to read the inspirational quotes on corridor walls. Pupils know about democracy and the appointment of a new Prime Minister. They treat everyone equally with respect. They learn about different religions and cultures.

The school participates in events such as World Book Day, Comic Relief and special events across the year. Pupils enjoyed celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, sending their hand-made bunting to the local care home. Leaders consider these celebrations carefully and any impact on families. However, they do recognise they could do more. Some parents and pupils would also like to see more clubs, visits and visitors offered by the school. Leaders have plans in place to develop the range of extra-curricular opportunities.

The diocese, local authority, parents and local community think highly of the headteacher and the school. More pupils are joining the school, both in Reception and further up the school. Staff enjoy working in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is central to all the school does. Leaders know the challenges pupils and parents can face in their community. All staff are very well trained. They look out for any signs that might indicate a concern or need. They ensure pupils and their families receive the support they require. The creation of a 'Community and Well-being Team' provides pupils and families with advice and the early help they need. Families value this.

Record-keeping is robust. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, in the community and when online. Leaders, including governors, take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have reviewed and redesigned the curriculum in most subjects to meet the needs of the school and its pupils. However, a few subjects still need reviewing, and leaders in these subjects cannot, at present, accurately check what pupils are learning and remembering over time. Leaders should review the curriculum in these subjects and ensure that all subject leaders have the skills and opportunities they need to monitor their subjects so all subjects are at the same high standards.
- Leaders recognise that opportunities for clubs, visits and visitors are currently limited. As a result, not all pupils are able to explore and develop their interests and talents. Leaders should implement their plans to give each class experiences over the year and extend the range of clubs on offer.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	103836
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10241257
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Price
Headteacher	Keith Rondeau
Website	www.st-marks.dudley.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	6 April 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England faith school. Its religious character was last inspected in November 2015, when it was judged to be good. It is due a section 48 inspection in this academic year.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- An inspector met with key staff responsible for safeguarding and checked the single central record and procedures for the recruitment of staff. The inspector discussed procedures and policies relating to safeguarding and the welfare of pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the

curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at school documentation and pupils' work.
- Inspectors watched pupils' behaviour in class and at other times during the day, and spoke with parents, staff and pupils about behaviour.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the Church of England Diocese and of the local authority.
- An inspector spoke with parents during a parent workshop. Inspectors also considered responses, including free-text comments, to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire, and pupil and staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors studied the school's website and public information.

Inspection team

Tina Willmott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Parker	Ofsted Inspector
Vanessa Payne	Ofsted Inspector

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