

Inspection of St Mark's Church of England School

Stafford Road, Shirley, Southampton, Hampshire SO15 5TE

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very caring towards others. Around school, pupils are quick to offer others a helping hand. The school's Christian values of love, belonging and service thread through all areas of everyday life. Pupils understand the importance of respecting cultures, beliefs and lifestyles which are different from their own. As one pupil said: 'Everyone makes us feel included and valued for who we are. That is what makes our school a fantastic community.'

Leaders want the best for each pupil. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and polite. Bullying is not tolerated at St Mark's. Pupils feel safe and trust staff. They know that adults will help them deal with any worries they have.

Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They take on leadership roles, such as library monitors, young governors, collective worship leaders and e-cadets. Pupils are proud of their campaign to reduce traffic on the roads outside their school. This is helping to raise awareness of the impact of carbon emissions in the local area. Pupils relish trips to local sporting facilities, such as the Ageas Bowl and the Southampton Football Club. They learn to play musical instruments, including drums, ukulele, piano and glockenspiel.

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

Leaders and governors are credible champions of this school and community. In recent times, they have worked diligently to steer the school through a period of much change. As well as dealing with the difficulties posed by COVID-19, they have successfully overseen the school's growth into an all-through provision. Leaders have also navigated skilfully the smooth transition to brand-new, purpose-built premises. Despite the additional challenges, leaders are sharply focused on providing pupils with a high quality of education.

Leaders have designed an interesting and engaging curriculum, which runs seamlessly from early years to Year 7. The curriculum in all subjects is well structured and ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are clear about the important knowledge and vocabulary pupils should learn step by step and in each subject. They make sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified promptly and accurately. Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum offer, with appropriate adaptations to support them.

Lessons are engaging and lively. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils make links in what they know already. Typically, teachers encourage pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary to explain and deepen their understanding of the ideas taught. However, in some lessons, including in early years, teachers do not make sure that pupils are clear about the important knowledge they need to learn and remember well. As a result, pupils, and children in early years, do not achieve as well as they could across the curriculum. Leaders are addressing this.

Pupils are enthusiastic readers. They look forward to visiting the well-stocked school library. Older pupils talk animatedly about the diverse range of texts teachers read and share with them. Children learn phonics from the start of the Reception Year. The phonics programme is well sequenced. Leaders make sure that the books pupils read help them practise the sounds they learn. However, some staff lack the expertise to teach phonics effectively. As a result, some of the youngest readers do not learn to read as quickly and fluently as they could. Leaders are providing important training for staff.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils debate and explore topics such as animal rights, refugeehood, mutual respect and the rule of law. Pupils learn about being responsible citizens. For instance, they are promoting the importance of recycling in school and organising litter picking in the local area. Pupils value and appreciate differences. As well as working with visiting speakers, pupils visit different places of worship, such as the mosque and the gurdwara. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils welcome the opportunity to engage in after-school clubs, such as cricket, building with plastic bricks, Bollywood dancing and art.

Governors are skilled and knowledgeable. They use their training and professional expertise to provide thoughtful challenge and support for leaders. They probe well into the right things and know exactly what needs to embed further in the quality of education. Staff love working at this school. They are a strong team, and feel well supported by leaders regarding their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff understand the context and challenges of the local area well. Staff are alert to the slightest signs which indicate that pupils may need help. They know how to report their concerns quickly and appropriately. Leaders take timely actions to make sure that pupils get the support they need. They work well with external agencies. Leaders complete all necessary checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children.

Teachers help pupils to be safe by teaching them about risks that they can meet outside of school. Pupils know how to keep safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Phonics teaching is inconsistent. Some staff do not check and help the youngest readers learn their phonics as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are well trained to teach phonics effectively.
- In some lessons, and in early years, teachers do not make sure that pupils are clear about the knowledge and ideas they need to learn and remember well. As a

result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that staff in all phases have the required expertise to check and help pupils embed their learning.

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	116342
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10242196
Type of school	All-through
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils	595
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Court
Headteacher	Stephanie Bryant (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stmarksschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	20 and 21 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, St Mark's Church of England School has expanded into an all-through school. It is growing in roll year on year. Currently, there are pupils from Reception class to Year 7.
- Pupils moved into a brand-new, purpose-built school in June 2022. The new site was officially opened in September 2022.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with nine governors, including the chair of

governors. She also met with two school improvement officers from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Winchester.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and physical education. To do this, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum design in music, history and science.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. She reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults. Inspectors spoke to pupils, staff and governors.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation and school development priorities, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, external monitoring reports from the local authority and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Cathy Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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