

Inspection of St Mark's CofE Primary School

Manor Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 5EA

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school fulfils its mission to 'let your light shine' in this joyful, inclusive and nurturing community. Expectations are high for all. Pupils proudly rise to meet high aspirations by behaving well and working hard. Many pupils are disadvantaged and have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures equal opportunities for all through a deeply compassionate ethos. Pupils feel safe, valued, special and unique. Despite some low achievements in national tests last year, pupils are achieving well across the curriculum.

Parents and carers say that the school 'goes above and beyond' to support pupils. Personal development and pastoral care are excellent. The school's work to support vulnerable families, refugees and pupils with protected characteristics reflect an incredible commitment to enrich lives. The school's innovative 'Roots' project celebrated cultural identities of children who have fled war to find a warm welcome in this community. Pupils are passionate about equality and diversity.

Pupils enjoy a rich offer of sport, music and performance opportunities. A partnership with an independent school offers frequent enrichment. Through such links, pupils access experiences with science, language, theatre and more. The take-up of opportunities by disadvantaged pupils is exceptional. The school overcomes obstacles to ensure that nobody misses out.

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

Children make a great start in early years. They are thriving together as they develop early language and number skills in a caring environment rich with learning opportunities. Phonics teaching is consistently effective. All staff use the same strategies to give children plenty of valuable practice. Catch-up activities match this high quality. As a result, pupils become fluent, confident and motivated readers as they move through the school. Early years is also where the school's impressive work to identify and support pupils' needs begins. Across classes, staff and leaders collaborate to work out where help is needed. The school designs adaptations and resources to make sure every pupil can access the curriculum and make progress with their learning.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed the curriculum to ensure that pupils know and remember their learning across a broad range of subjects. The school shows innovation and ambition for all. In subjects such as history and art and design, pupils, including those with SEND, learn to make impressive comparisons between different periods of time while using subject-specific language. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and design activities well to help pupils across the school to remember key content over time. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school despite some low national test results in 2024. Pupils now know and apply mathematical concepts and strategies with skill and success. The school's recent work on assessment is proving effective. Teachers check what pupils know and plan activities to address gaps. However, there is more work to do with writing. Pupils find it difficult to produce longer writing with accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Pupils' behaviour is positive. Relationships across the school are warm and respectful. When pupils struggle to manage their emotions, the school provides impressive help. Children in early years learn to identify their feelings and to resolve any conflicts. As they move through the school, pupils show high concentration, motivation and focus. However, the school has struggled with high rates of pupil absence. Some excellent pastoral work has helped vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils to overcome obstacles to attending school on time every day. The school is doing all it can but knows this focus must continue so that all pupils attend regularly.

Personal development is a significant strength. Pupils learn to stay healthy and safe through a carefully considered curriculum offer. From art therapy to counselling, the school harnesses expertise to boost pupils' mental health and well-being. Visitors include the dentist who teaches children in early years how to brush their teeth well. The school celebrates the best in everyone to help pupils to shine. There are endless opportunities for pupils to develop and share their unique talents and interests. Community links enrich school life further. Pupils make a tangible difference to the school through inspirational leadership roles such as pupil governor, mathematics ambassador and worship leader.

Leaders and governors are dedicated, compassionate and effective. They reflect, challenge and support each other to address areas that need improving. As a result, the quality of education across the school and provision in early years have both improved significantly. Pupils are at the heart of every decision. Staff feel highly supported and morale is buoyant. One parent reflected the views of many when saying, 'This is a caring and loving school which does everything to help children'. This school is going from strength to strength.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's writing curriculum and its delivery does not sufficiently prepare pupils to write accurately and at length. This means that pupils are not always strongly prepared for their next steps because they can find it hard to write with accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. The school must ensure that pupils' writing skills develop further to ensure that writing outcomes improve.
- Some pupils do not attend school frequently enough. This means that they miss out on valuable learning opportunities and personal development at school. The school must continue its focus on ensuring the highest possible attendance for all pupils.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	114545
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10341340
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	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Allistare Smedley (co-chair) Amanda Healey (co-chair)
Headteacher	Jane Fendley
Website	www.stmarks.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Chichester. The school last received a section 48 inspection in March 2019. The next section 48 inspection is likely to take place by March 2027.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- There is before-school care on the school site, overseen by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENDCo, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including one of the co-chairs.
- The lead inspector met with an adviser from the local authority and spoke by telephone with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For deep dives, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a range of pupils read. The inspector observed catch-up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support to pupils.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils to learn their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the gates before school.

Inspection team

Scott Reece, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Scott Fasciolo-Barnes

Ofsted Inspector

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