

St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Redhouse Lane, Bredbury, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 1BX

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- For several years, the quality of education at this school has not been good enough. This is because leaders, including governors, have not ensured that strategies to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement have borne enough success.
- Governors have an overgenerous view of the school. They have failed to challenge leaders and hold them sufficiently to account for pupils' progress.
- Recent improvements do not outweigh the fact that teaching continues to require improvement.
- Leaders and governors have not demonstrated the capacity to improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, too many pupils are not ready for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders' views of the school are inaccurate. Improvement planning does not provide a secure starting point for tackling long-standing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Across the curriculum, teachers do not use assessment information to challenge pupils effectively. This means that pupils are not enabled to make good progress over time or to overcome gaps in their learning. This is especially true in mathematics.
- Not all middle leaders have a sufficiently positive impact on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. They are not effectively held to account for the progress that pupils make.
- The proportion of pupils persistently absent from school is above the national average. It is not decreasing quickly enough.
- Current pupils speak of behaviour disrupting learning. Evidence gathered on inspection confirms this to be true.
- Overall, teachers' subject knowledge is not sufficiently secure. As a result, they do not question pupils effectively or address misconceptions quickly.
- In the early years, some activities are not designed skilfully enough to enable children to make stronger progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are proud of the nurture and support they provide for pupils and the impact these are having on pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Pupils enjoy reading and love books. Most children, including the most able, read fluently and confidently.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership, including governance, so that pupils benefit from at least a good standard of education by ensuring that:
 - leaders' views of the school are accurate and result in focused priorities to support swift improvements to teaching and learning
 - plans for improvement are sharply focused on improving pupils' outcomes
 - leadership capacity is strengthened so that senior and middle leaders have the skills to evaluate their areas of responsibility and contribute strongly to school improvement
 - leaders' checks pay greater attention to reducing the inconsistencies in teaching across a range of subjects
 - the governing body has sufficient accurate information to provide robust challenge to hold senior leaders to account effectively
 - the curriculum is developed so that it deepens pupils' learning in all subjects.
- Improve teaching in all key stages to at least consistently good over time so that pupils' progress and attainment improve across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers acquire the essential subject knowledge to teach effectively across the curriculum
 - teachers have high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve
 - teachers use assessment information to match learning appropriately to the needs of pupils
 - teachers ensure that pupils acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need in order to make a successful start on the next stage of their education
 - teachers tackle pupils' misconceptions and use questioning more effectively to deepen pupils' learning.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by making sure that the curriculum supports the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding across all subjects.
- Improve the provision in the early years by making sure that activities are suitably challenging and enable different groups of children to make good or better progress in their learning.

- Improve the personal development and behaviour of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is reduced to a level in line with or below that seen nationally
 - helping pupils understand how the school expects them to behave in order to become successful learners.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The standard of education at St Mark’s has not improved enough over a considerable period of time. Leaders have not been effective in addressing many areas for improvement identified at previous inspections.
- Improvement strategies have been implemented too slowly or have not had the desired impact. Consequently, teaching and pupils’ outcomes continue to require improvement. Moreover, leaders have overseen a decline in the quality of provision in the early years and in pupils’ personal development and behaviour since the previous inspection.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too much across the school. As a result, the progress and attainment of pupils currently at the school continue to fluctuate too much. This means that they are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education as they should be.
- Leaders have an inaccurate view of the school’s overall effectiveness and the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education. Leaders have tried many different strategies to improve pupils’ learning but these have not made enough difference. Leaders have not been successful in rectifying the weaknesses in teaching. This work is now under way but still lacks urgency and consistency.
- Leaders have provided a range of professional development for staff. However, this training has not delivered the improvements needed in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Action plans, including school development plans, do not focus precisely enough on the areas which require improvement. Additionally, systems for checking the impact of leaders’ actions are weak. As a result, the pace of improvement is too slow.
- A significant proportion of the pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve the behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. However, this funding and funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have not been used well enough to strengthen pupils’ progress over time. While leaders are now beginning to evaluate the impact of this funding on pupils’ academic achievement, they have paid too little attention to this in the past.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding is used effectively to improve staff confidence in delivering PE lessons. The school has been particularly successful in football competitions. Pupils said they enjoy sport, including netball and dance. Pupils are active at lunchtimes in a variety of clubs and this contributes well to their health and enjoyment of sport.
- Leaders have developed the curriculum so that pupils have the opportunity to learn across a range of subjects. Regular opportunities, for example to work with music teachers and PE coaches, allow pupils to develop their skills in singing and sports. Although improving, in subjects such as science and history, the newly designed curriculum has not enabled pupils to acquire the skills and knowledge that they need to

make strong progress. This is because leaders have not ensured that teachers have secure subject knowledge to teach these different subjects in depth.

- Some subject leaders are making a positive difference to teaching. Action taken in writing, for example, has resulted in improvements in the progress that pupils make in developing their vocabulary and sentence structure. However, other subject leaders have not brought about the changes required to improve provision for pupils quickly enough. For example, initiatives in mathematics have not been implemented securely across the school. They are making little difference to the achievement of current pupils. This is because leaders have not undertaken effective checks on pupils' work to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives that have been introduced.
- Due to the decline in the quality of provision, the local authority has provided the school with the support and challenge needed to hasten the speed of improvement. However, this has not had enough impact. The inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' achievement noted at the previous inspection continue to be a feature of this school. Furthermore, school leaders are too reliant on the external support provided by the local authority. The extensive support programme shows no sign of reducing in the near future.
- Leaders ensure that the nurture of pupils is a high priority. However, some barriers to learning are not being removed quickly enough for some pupils to access the learning they need. Attendance is still low for some pupils.
- Despite plans for improvement put into place by the leader for SEND, pupils with SEND are not making the substantial progress that they need to make so that they can quickly fill gaps in their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the school. As a result, the majority of pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of people from a range of backgrounds and faiths. This mostly prepares them well for their lives as citizens in modern Britain. However, some pupils are unaware of the harm derogatory name-calling can cause to others.

Governance of the school

- The governing body does not receive sufficiently detailed reports and information about important aspects of the school's performance. Governors have not challenged the headteacher and senior leaders about the school's effectiveness or held them to account for the actions that they have taken to improve teaching and pupils' actions. Consequently, governors are not playing their part in securing school improvement.
- Governors have an overgenerous view of the school's performance. They have accepted leaders' inaccurate evaluations of teaching and pupils' outcomes too readily. They have, over time, received training from the local authority to support them in understanding the school's performance information. However, this has had little impact on their ability to fulfil their responsibilities regarding the strategic direction for the school.
- Governors have made sure that the school's use of additional government funding has improved attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. However,

governors are unclear about how effectively this funding has been used to improve the academic outcomes for these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A recent audit by the local authority shows that procedures and policies to keep pupils safe are strong. Evidence gathered on inspection confirms this to be true. All checks to ensure that adults are cleared to work with children have been undertaken and are recorded in the single central record. The school works effectively with external agencies and parents and carers to protect the most vulnerable pupils.
- Safeguarding training is provided for staff and they understand the signs they would look for in order to keep children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent and variable across the school. Teachers give pupils tasks that do not match their starting points. As a result, pupils' progress varies across and within year groups and subjects.
- Some teachers do not use questioning effectively to gauge pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly. Where questioning is used to good effect, teaching is sharply targeted and moves pupils' learning on more quickly.
- Assessment of pupils' learning is not sufficiently accurate for teachers to measure how well pupils are doing. Consequently, in a range of subjects, tasks often fail to challenge pupils enough. Many tasks are too easy for the most able pupils and sometimes too difficult for the least able. This slows pupils' progress. Occasionally, it also leads to poor behaviour which teachers do not always manage well.
- Some teachers have weak subject knowledge, leading to low expectations of what pupils can achieve. It also results in a lack of progression across different subjects. Weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge mean that they are unable to spot, and then address, pupils' misconceptions.
- In contrast, some teachers have a much stronger grasp of what should be taught. These teachers enthuse pupils because they foster pupils' interest and curiosity. In key stage 2 for example, pupils discussed and explained algebraic equations, which contributed to a deeper understanding of this strand of mathematics.
- Opportunities to provide further challenge or address any misconceptions are often missed by teaching assistants. This is because adults and pupils are overly focused on completing a task rather than deepening learning.
- Meaningful opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in different subjects are now being used more effectively. Teachers have begun to encourage pupils to use their writing skills in history and geography lessons. For example, pupils wrote diary entries linked to their topic on the Second World War. This has contributed to improvements in pupils' writing. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should

in writing because not enough emphasis has been given to developing pupils' writing in the past.

- In mathematics, pupils are developing more secure fluency skills, especially in multiplication. However, too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. In some cases, this results in pupils being unable to identify what aspects of mathematics are needed to solve problems. This hinders their progress.
- Improvements to the teaching of phonics are helping pupils to make better progress in reading. Pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated secure phonics skills. Many pupils, including the most able, read fluently and with expression.
- Reading lessons are successfully helping the most able to develop their skills further. However, in these lessons, less-able pupils struggle to decipher the meaning of texts and to read words accurately without the support of an adult.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Some pupils lack determination in their learning. When teaching does not excite or engage them, they lose interest. Staff do not consistently encourage pupils to develop the resilience to become more effective learners. Not all pupils understand or use effectively the school's newly implemented expectations about learning behaviours to help them make progress.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy contributing to school life through additional roles, such as helping to set up and review assemblies and promoting healthy lifestyles through the sports council. One pupil, reflective of the group, commented, 'I am proud of my role as I know my actions will have an impact on others.'
- In the classroom, relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils are helping to develop some pupils' confidence and self-esteem. However, many pupils are over-reliant on support to complete tasks. This discourages some pupils from developing their skills independently.
- Presentation of work varies from class to class. In some classes, teachers' expectations are high and, consequently, pupils' handwriting is accurate and books are neat. However, some books show that teachers are prepared to accept work that is not good enough.
- The vast majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils clearly explain how they make sure that they keep themselves safe from strangers and when they are using the internet. Although some pupils told inspectors that bullying and falling-out happen, they know which adults to talk to when these occur. They say that adults then resolve most situations.
- Staff and pupils have a good understanding of the forms discriminatory behaviour may take. In the main, reported incidents are dealt with appropriately by senior leaders. Information provided by the school indicates that the number of reported incidents has

decreased over this year. Nonetheless, pupils told inspectors that there were still instances of discriminatory behaviour occurring.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils' behaviour varies between classes according to the quality of teaching. When teachers are not vigilant, a significant minority of pupils tend to waste time. This slows their progress and, on occasions, that of others. As a result, some pupils reported that their learning is sometimes disrupted. However, this is less so than was previously the case.
- Through Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, some parents expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes. Parents' mixed views reflect the differences in the standards of pupils' behaviour throughout the school.
- Pupils told inspectors that behaviour in the playground and outside of lessons has improved in the current school year. School records and observations during the inspection support this view. There has been a noticeable drop in incidents of poor behaviour logged by school staff and a decline in the number of fixed-term exclusions since the changes to the school's behaviour policy took effect.
- Pupils' attendance over time is below the national average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is significantly above the national average. Although leaders are working more closely with pupils and their parents, the attendance of some groups of pupils is improving too slowly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress and attainment have not been successful enough. They have lacked urgency. The progress pupils make is not strong enough in a wide range of subjects.
- The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth at key stage 1 has risen to be in line with the national average. However, since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 has been too variable. Too many pupils are not prepared as well as they should be for the next stage of their education.
- Current pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across year groups is also variable because of weaknesses in some teaching. While there are some signs of improvement in pupils' workbooks, this is not substantial enough to make up for weaknesses in the past.
- The progress and attainment of the most able pupils vary across the school. A number of pupils confirmed to inspectors that they feel tasks are sometimes too easy. The most able pupils are not always reaching the standards of which they are capable because teachers do not provide work that is challenging enough. Although there has been an increase in pupils achieving greater depth at key stage 1, not enough pupils reach greater depth in writing or the higher standards in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

- The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is increasing over time. Nonetheless, it has been below the national figures since the previous inspection.
- The pupil premium funding is not being used to secure good academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils quickly enough. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils' attainment at the expected level at the end of key stages 1 and 2 was below the national averages. The gap between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of other pupils nationally is not diminishing quickly enough over time.
- Attainment in science has been below the national average at key stages 1 and 2 for three years. However, work in current pupils' books shows that they are gaining the investigative and practical skills that complement scientific knowledge.
- Pupils access a broad range of subjects. However, pupils' work across the curriculum varies considerably because they are not gaining the subject-specific skills and knowledge they need in some subjects, such as geography and history.
- The school's assessment information and work in current books indicate that pupils with SEND are not making strong enough progress from their starting points because the support they receive is not focusing well enough on academic progress.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the early years with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been below the national average for five years. This does not represent sufficiently strong progress for many children. This means that children are not prepared well enough for Year 1.
- The effectiveness of learning in Nursery and Reception is mixed. Children typically make more progress when working directly with adults than when tackling independent activities. This is because staff do not make the most of the learning environment by providing a wide range of stimulating and engaging activities so that children learn as they play. As a result, children do not develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills well enough.
- The leadership of the early years has improved recently. Leaders have a more accurate view of what needs to develop and what is working well across the early years. Plans for improvement, such as for the development of the outdoor areas, are focused.
- Relationships between adults and children in the early years are positive. Children's behaviour is typically good. Staff ensure that children are well cared for and learn and play happily together.
- Staff identify children's additional needs well. Staff work well with external specialists to ensure that children receive the help they need early and quickly.
- Children use their phonics well when writing words and sentences independently. For example, a group of children were observed writing simple words to describe buying hot cross buns.

- Parents of children in the early years feel involved in their children's learning because staff hold a range of informative meetings. These events are well attended and help parents to understand how to support their children's learning at home.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. Adults give close attention to children's well-being. Safeguarding procedures are effective. Staff are well trained and undertake appropriate risk assessments to ensure that children are kept safe.
- Transition into Nursery and Reception is well planned. Staff work closely with parents and any relevant professionals to ensure that children settle quickly and enjoy school.

School details

Unique reference number	106104
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10087827

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Rhodes
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Whitehead
Telephone number	0161 430 3418
Website	www.st-marks.stockport.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-marks.stockport.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 January 2017

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The school was previously judged to require improvement in 2015 and 2017.
- There has been a larger-than-average decrease in the total number of pupils on roll, from 303 in 2017 to 236 in 2019.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is also higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also lower than the national average.
- The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was conducted in March 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors conducted meetings with leaders to review the impact of their work on pupils' learning and outcomes. They considered the school's current assessment information and conducted an in-depth analysis of pupils' work across a range of subjects to consider how well pupils learn and achieve over time.
- Inspectors visited classes in every year group. Some of these visits were conducted jointly with leaders.
- Behaviour logs and leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school were considered. Inspectors also met with leaders to review the impact of their work to safeguard pupils' welfare and promote good behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors held a meeting with members of the governing body. A discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their views on the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school.
- A group of pupils read to the inspectors. Inspectors also heard pupils read during visits to classrooms and talked with them about their attitudes to reading.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents through informal discussions in the playground before school. Inspectors also considered 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 10 free-text comments, and 23 responses to the online staff survey. There were no responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sandie La Porta	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Howard	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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