

Swanage St Mark's Church of England Primary School

High Street, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2PH

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Following an unsettled period, with many changes of leadership, the school is now led by an effective headteacher, middle leaders and governing body. This has resulted in the school's rapid improvement.
- Leaders have supported and challenged teachers to improve their practice across all areas of the curriculum. As a result, teaching is now consistently good and pupils are producing high-quality work across the curriculum.
- Pupils in all year groups are making good progress. This is a significant improvement on recent years, where progress was slow and the school did not meet the government's floor standards.
- Although standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved, fewer pupils are working at a greater depth in writing compared to reading and mathematics.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely so that extra help can be given quickly to those pupils who may fall behind. However, the tracking of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not always sufficiently detailed.
- St Mark's is a very inclusive school and successfully supports pupils whatever their needs. The number of pupils on roll is growing rapidly. A high proportion of pupils have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Behaviour throughout the school is good. The school has effective systems for managing behaviour and pupils know what is expected of them. The school is an orderly, calm environment. Bullying is rare, and pupils say that when it occurs it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge lower than those typical for their age. They make good progress and, as a result, are well prepared to start key stage 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in writing across the school by ensuring that:
 - there is a sufficient level of challenge in writing for the most able pupils
 - middle leaders support their colleagues in planning for this increased level of challenge
 - all staff understand the standards expected at greater depth in writing.
- Ensure that the school's system for checking the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities captures the small steps in progress made by pupils so teachers can, more precisely, plan for their next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school is well led by a strong and effective headteacher who is well supported by the leadership team. Following several years of turbulence, and many changes of leaders and teachers, the school is now settled, enabling effective learning to take place.
- School leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and pupils. Staff are committed to the school. They are proud of improvements in the school and of the work they do with pupils. Pupils told the inspectors that they are expected to work hard, but that they enjoy learning and the adults look after them well.
- Middle leaders understand the school's assessment information and what the school needs to do to improve further. They have benefited from leadership training which ensures that leadership is dispersed throughout the senior staff. Middle leaders support their colleagues to improve their practice. They have been instrumental in raising standards in teaching, although they recognise that more challenge is required for the most able pupils in writing. Middle leaders are fully committed to the success of the school.
- Leaders have raised the quality of teaching by rigorously challenging poor performance and putting in place appropriate training to improve practice. Leaders monitor teaching closely and have a very clear picture of the standard of teaching across the school. Due to strong leadership, previously weak teaching has now been eradicated.
- Leaders have put in place training which is closely targeted to the needs of the school. For example, teaching assistants have had extensive training. As a result, support for learning and behaviour management is now consistent throughout the school.
- The curriculum is well planned and wide ranging, and engages pupils' interest. Leaders recognised the need for pupils to improve their vocabulary. High-quality literature is now incorporated into every topic in order to develop pupils' language skills and broaden their reading experience. As a result of good planning, pupils enjoy their learning and are challenged across the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of the Second World War and spoke enthusiastically to an inspector about the Allies and Axis Powers. Year 2 pupils, who have been learning about St Lucia, could find it on a map and talk about its geographical and cultural features.
- School leaders ensure that pupils learn from a wide range of experiences. For example, when it became apparent that almost half of the children in the Reception class had never been to the beach, leaders planned a mini-topic and took all of the children down to the sea. The school organises many sports clubs which take place after school, as well as a gardening club and maths club.
- The school has a much higher proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities than is found in other schools nationally. Their needs are wide ranging, and the school mostly meets their requirements effectively. Record-keeping is generally good. However, the school's tracking system lacks the detail required to measure the small

steps in progress made by pupils with the most severe needs. This is limiting teachers' ability to plan learning which is precisely matched to the needs of these pupils.

- Leaders have introduced a highly effective behaviour management system which is used consistently by all staff. Pupils understand the system and inspectors saw it being implemented successfully, including with pupils who have behavioural and emotional difficulties. Staff consistently model calm and friendly attitudes to pupils.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the pupil premium is spent effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in making good progress. The headteacher commissioned an external review of the way the pupil premium is spent to ensure that it is used appropriately to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The sport premium funding is spent to increase physical activity. Some of the money is targeted towards pupils who would specifically benefit from additional activities. For example, a small group of pupils have undertaken a course with physical challenges and team-building activities. This has proved effective in raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school has achieved a national award for sport. Pupils now take part in more inter-school sports competitions.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, pupils have been taught to value the natural world through activities including gardening club, forest school and meeting the astronaut Tim Peake. Pupils' spiritual development is largely linked to the school's identity as a church school. Pupils are prepared for life beyond school through discussing careers, ambitions and how to achieve their goals.
- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain through the explicit teaching of the importance of rules, and that they should apply to all. Pupils learn about democracy by voting for the school council and team leaders. Pupils have met the Mayor of Swanage and taken part in a town council meeting. Pupils respect other faiths and talk about some of the main tenets of other religions in a respectful way. Pupils know what racism is and are adamant that there is no racist name-calling or discrimination in the school. They are confident that the headteacher would deal with it effectively if it occurred.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The chair of the governing body and the vice-chair are new to their roles, but have quickly learned their responsibilities. They have supported the headteacher in making recent improvements, as well as when difficult issues have been tackled.
- The headteacher and governors have identified accurately the priorities for further improvements. These are identified in the school's development plan. Governors understand the school's assessment information and use this to hold the headteacher to account.
- Governors ensure that government funding, including the pupil premium grant and the sport premium, is spent effectively. All have undertaken training to help them fulfil their roles.

- Governors understand their statutory duties regarding safeguarding, and all have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a much larger proportion of vulnerable children than is found in most schools. Leaders have put in place robust, effective systems for protecting children, and there is a very well-developed culture of safeguarding.
- Parents and carers are confident that their children are kept safe. Pupils know how to get help and are confident that they would be listened to should they have concerns.
- All adults have undertaken safeguarding training and know what to do if they are worried about a child. The school uses a simple electronic system for recording any concerns. This is used effectively by staff and, as a result, the school is able to identify any patterns. Child protection records are up to date and detailed.
- The school ensures that everybody who works with children in the school is suitable to do so. Leaders have made pre-employment checks in line with statutory guidance. The headteacher has undertaken safer recruitment training. The site is a safe environment and well maintained.
- There is a good level of supervision at playtimes and lunchtimes. If an accident were to occur, a large proportion of the staff are trained to administer first aid.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan interesting lessons that are carefully designed to move pupils' learning on. Teachers insist on the same high standards in all subjects, not just English and mathematics.
- Phonics is taught effectively in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2. This helps pupils to get off to a good start with their reading. Pupils read regularly and often to an adult. As a result, teachers are able to monitor the quantity and quality of their pupils' reading.
- Teachers incorporate high-quality works of literature into each of the topics taught. This is helping to extend pupils' vocabulary and wider knowledge.
- Teachers assess work regularly so they know how well their pupils are doing. Teachers act swiftly to put in place extra help for any pupil who is falling behind, or additional challenge for those doing work that is too easy for them.
- Teachers give their pupils feedback in line with the school's marking policy. Pupils told the inspector that they like receiving this feedback and that it helps them to make their work better. Pupils are provided with opportunities to respond to their teachers' comments and rectify mistakes.
- Improved teaching has resulted in an increasing proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in writing. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher

standards has not increased in line with the improvements in mathematics and reading. This is due to insufficient challenge in writing for the most able pupils.

- Presentation in books is of a high standard, and pupils have many opportunities to practise recording their learning. Handwriting is generally good, with pupils being taught the correct pencil grip and letter formation from their earliest days in school.
- The headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, interventions manager and teachers work together to ensure that support is closely matched to pupils' needs. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities receive additional help that is planned to meet their individual needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils' behaviour well. In all lessons seen during the inspection, pupils displayed a positive attitude to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know that it is their responsibility to look after pupils and keep them safe. There is a very well-developed culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and, if they were concerned about themselves or about a friend, they would talk to the headteacher. They are confident that she would listen to them and act quickly.
- Systems for protecting pupils are well established. Record-keeping is thorough, and incidents are followed up and reported to governors. The school does not shy away from child protection issues. The safety of pupils is at the heart of this school.
- The school is a very nurturing environment. Children have the opportunity of a breakfast before school. School leaders liaise frequently with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that all pupils and their families have access to basic necessities.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying in the school. Pupils told inspectors that there is no longer any bullying, although there had been in the past. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that bullying is rare, and if it does occur it is followed up and dealt with appropriately.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils could tell an inspector why they should not put personal information online. Pupils are also taught about road safety and 'stranger danger'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff are polite, calm and cheerful towards pupils. As a result, pupils usually show these attitudes to adults and each other.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders' and teachers' high expectations of behaviour mean that pupils can usually take turns, share equipment and listen to the teacher and each other.
- Pupils move around school sensibly with no running or pushing. Playtime is enjoyable for pupils, who have a large, well-resourced space in which to play. There is a good level of supervision.
- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance have had a significant impact. The active promotion of good attendance and the introduction of strategies like the walking bus and morning nurture breakfast club have had a positive effect. Persistent absence has been halved, but is still slightly higher than the national figure.
- The number of exclusions has decreased, but is still higher than the national figure. The school welcomes pupils from other schools, many of whom have exhibited challenging behaviour in their previous schools. Exclusions at Swanage St Mark's are only undertaken for appropriate reasons and as a last resort. The school works well with parents to integrate pupils back into school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historically, pupils have not made strong enough progress over time. As a result, the school has not met government floor standards. In 2017, the school met the government's definition of a coasting school. However, improved leadership and teaching have resulted in strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics for current pupils. Consequently, across the school an increased proportion of pupils are now working at the level expected for their age. This progress is evident in the school's assessment information and supported by inspectors' observations of pupils' work seen around the school, and in their books.
- Similarly, in the majority of classes, a greater proportion of pupils are now working above the expectations for their age in reading and mathematics. However, this improvement is not evident in the proportion of pupils writing at greater depth.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has risen year on year and is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age.
- School leaders spend the pupil premium well to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils achieve at least as well as other children in the Reception class. In the national tests taken in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made slightly more progress than other pupils at both key stages 1 and 2. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was lower than for other pupils in 2017.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress from their different starting points.
- In reading and mathematics, teachers meet the needs of the most able pupils by providing more challenging work. This was seen in work in books, as well as in observations of learning. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were being challenged to solve complex equations. Year 4 pupils were developing their reasoning skills by

discussing whether the axes on graphs should start at zero. Teachers do not consistently provide this level of challenge for their most able writers. This is limiting the proportion of pupils writing at greater depth.

- In 2017, the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development was below the national average. However, this represented good progress from their starting points, many of which were below average. Children currently in the early years are making good progress and are on track to attain well. This was seen in the school's record-keeping, in children's learning journey books and through observations of learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the school in the Reception class with skills and knowledge below that typical for their age. As a result of good teaching, children make strong progress and the majority of children leave Reception well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- Early years staff have ensured that there is close liaison between the school and the pre-school, which shares the same site. As a result, most children join Reception familiar with the setting and ready to start at St Mark's. The few children who arrive from other settings have opportunities to get to know the school, so they also settle well.
- Parents comment positively on the good support and teaching their children receive in the Reception class. There is good communication between home and school.
- The teacher and other Reception staff organise well-planned activities. These enable children to make good progress in all areas of the curriculum, as well as to develop them physically, emotionally and socially.
- Many children join the school with poorly developed language skills but adults use questioning very effectively to develop language and concepts. For example, a boy who was working at the sand tray had a very productive discussion with an adult about 'full', 'empty', 'more', 'less', 'big' and 'small'. It was apparent that good learning was taking place for both language and the mathematical concept of capacity.
- Children's behaviour in the Reception class is good. Children are able to take turns and share. Children listen attentively in 'carpet time' and participate enthusiastically in learning their phonic sounds. Adults model calm, cheerful, friendly behaviour to the children, with the result that children are usually calm and happy.
- For the past two years, girls have made more progress than boys. However, staff in the Reception class are addressing this by ensuring that activities are planned to engage boys as well as girls.
- Disadvantaged pupils are very well supported and attain as well as, or better than, their peers.
- Safeguarding is effective and all welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	142165
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10047232

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dai Hounsell
Headteacher	Sally Craig
Telephone number	01929 422949
Website	www.stmarksswanage.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@stmarksswanage.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- This is the first inspection since the school become part of the Saturn Education Trust in 2015.
- The headteacher joined the school 18 months ago. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body took up their roles at the start of this academic year.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with just a few pupils coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A much larger proportion of pupils than is found in most schools nationally are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

- The number of pupils joining the school from other schools is high, and the number on roll is increasing rapidly.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection of religious education took place in March 2014.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards in 2016 or 2017.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in lessons. They also made short visits to classes to ascertain the breadth of the curriculum and the quality of behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors observed an assembly and playtimes.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, teachers, senior and middle leaders and governors.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' workbooks. They listened to children read and talked to them about their reading.
- Inspectors spoke to parents in the playground before school and took account of the 42 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Two letters were received from parents during this inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 12 members of staff who responded to the survey.

Inspection team

Janet Maul, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Non Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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