

# Mark Cross Church of England Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114558
<b>Local Authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326038
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gavin Jones

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	104
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tessa Younger
<b>Headteacher</b>	D P Swan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Mark Cross Crowborough TN6 3PJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 852866
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 852866

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. They particularly investigated:

- the progress and achievement of pupils across the school
- provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how the school tracks pupils' progress.

Parts of several lessons were observed. Inspectors met with a range of pupils, including members of the school council. They met with some members of staff and the joint chairs of the governing body. School information, such as evidence of pupils' completed work, the school development plan, reports from other agencies and tracking documents showing pupils' progress were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but where the inspection did not agree with the school's self-evaluation, this was noted and has been included, where appropriate, in the report.

## Description of the school

This primary school is much smaller than the average. All pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies markedly from year group to year group from 6% to 33%. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are educated in a class of their own, while other classes contain two year groups.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Mark Cross is an outstanding school. There are particularly notable features in the achievement of pupils, their personal development and the curriculum provided by the school. The quality of teaching and learning makes an outstanding contribution to the achievement of pupils, as do some significant elements of leadership and management. 'Mark Cross is an excellent school with a great spirit' is typical of the positive comments made by parents. The school very successfully helps pupils to build on the good start they receive in Reception.

In 2008, following a lengthy period of high standards in Year 6, results of the National Curriculum tests fell slightly, when measured against national averages. There were several reasons for this. Although the year group began its life numbering 16, this had fallen to nine by Year 6, making direct comparisons with national figures unreliable. Several able pupils left to go to independent schools, while one third of the remaining pupils were receiving support for their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's well managed assessment programme showed that in spite of standards falling in relation to previous years, these pupils had still made good progress from their standards noted in Year 2. Because the school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made equally excellent progress with virtually all reaching nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. One parent with a child who receives such support said, 'The school has been fantastic both in its teaching and care.'

Evidence from the school's tracking of pupils' performance, work books and inspectors' observations shows that the current Year 6 is working at levels which are, once again, well above those usually seen for this age group. This confirms that they have made exceptional progress since entering the school. A mother wrote, 'The school is a great place for children to learn and grow both academically and socially.' Pupils behave in an exemplary manner, show very good attitudes to their work and excellent relationships with other pupils and adults. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and parents know that their children are being well cared for. This was expressed unanimously by parents in the questionnaire. Pupils have good opportunities to develop skills for later life including the world of work. The oldest pupils have to prepare a product to sell at the summer fete. This involves market research, pricing, product research, manufacture and selling.

Pupils talk sensibly about healthy lifestyles and clearly understand the implications of diet and exercise on their health. They are clear that there is no bullying in the school and they contribute very successfully to the school and its local community. The school is a very cohesive community where all pupils are respected. Links with the church, local groups and businesses are of a high quality, with many groups using the school's facilities. What is less well developed are links established by the school in order to guide pupils to understand what life is like in the world beyond the village.

Teaching has an outstanding effect on supporting achievements and has clearly been improved over the recent past. During the inspection, a range of teaching was seen, from satisfactory to lessons with outstanding features. The vast majority of lessons are characterised by clear planning with activities created to challenge the different ages and abilities in the classes. Relationships are excellent both between pupils and with adults. This has a very positive effect on learning. Behaviour is also excellent and pupils respond very well to the good range of questioning redelivered by the teachers. As a result of such very effective teaching, virtually

all pupils make at least good progress in lessons and outstanding progress from the start of Reception to the end of Year 6. Staff, time and resources are deployed well, although in a few lessons the use made of teaching assistants, in the early parts of sessions is not as effective as it might be.

The outstanding curriculum supports pupils' personal and academic development extremely effectively. It is exceptionally well enriched by a very wide range of after school clubs and activities, visits and visitors, together with a residential visit. The school offers Spanish at different levels to all pupils, while the local authority helps the school provide a large number of pupils with the opportunity to learn the violin. The school holds several curriculum awards.

Pupils are supported well by adults and the overriding ethos of the school, so that their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Pupils are extremely well cared for. While targets are set for pupils, not all know their targets or can explain them. Marking is effective but sometimes inconsistent. At best, it gives good support to pupils and helps them understand the quality of their work and how to make improvements. Such guidance makes a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement.

The headteacher and his most senior managers have played a significant part in the school's success over several years. During that time, pupils have achieved outstandingly well. Leaders and managers are not complacent and set stretching targets for improvement. These targets are invariably met and often surpassed. The school has developed good links with other village schools and its local Community College to the benefit of its pupils. Governors fulfil their roles well, and are able to monitor the school in action, noting the impact of developments. Subject leaders fulfil their roles well, although they do not have opportunities to carry out classroom observations in their own subjects and this restricts the way they can manage improvements. The school has established firm links with a school in the Gambia, but has not established links with UK schools in different settings. This negatively affects pupils' knowledge and understanding of the heritages and cultures seen nationally in a multicultural society. This contributes to the view that leadership and management overall are good rather than outstanding. However, good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has strong capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the school with skills and experiences in line with those expected of this age group. The Reception class benefits from a good-sized, covered outdoor area, which is well used to enhance the learning experiences of the children. Children thoroughly enjoy their time at school; they find it fun and interesting and are extremely well behaved. Welfare and safeguarding requirements are good. Children progress exceptionally well and the standards they reach by the time they transfer into Year 1 are well above the national average. However, at times, learning is a little too directed by the teacher, not allowing children to be as independent in their learning as they might be. This is the reason that provision is judged good and not outstanding. Children work very well in groups sharing resources and communicating well with each other and with adults. Parents are actively involved with the Early Years Foundation Stage and communication between home and school is noted as very effective by a variety of parents in the Ofsted questionnaire. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Assessments are carried out accurately, providing a clear picture of each child's strengths and areas for further development. This information is then used

effectively to plan children's next steps in their learning. Children have access to a full curriculum including an introduction to Spanish.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Provide, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a better balance between opportunities for pupils to initiate their own learning experiences and those directed by the teacher.
- Improve the management of community cohesion; ensuring that pupils have a clear understanding of what life is like in a multicultural society, by providing sufficient opportunities to contrast their own lifestyles with others in different settings nationally.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mark Cross C of E Primary School, Crowborough TN 6 3PJ

Thank you for your help when we visited your school. Although we were only with you for the day, you helped us by sharing your views and showing us what you liked about the school. Yours is an outstanding school as it helps you make excellent progress so that you reach standards well above most other schools.

Here are some highlights:

- The progress you make in your work from Reception through to Year 6.
- Your behaviour, attitudes to work, your enjoyment of school, attendance and your understanding of health and safety issues.
- Your curriculum, which is interesting, exciting and supported by an excellent range of additional activities.
- The way your teachers help you learn so effectively.
- The way your headteacher and his senior managers lead the school to achieve such successful outcomes.

What the school needs to do better:

- In Reception, make sure children have more opportunities to choose activities for themselves to try out their own ideas.
- Give you more opportunities to develop your understanding of what different lifestyles are like for people in other parts of your own country.

I am sure that you will all continue to keep working hard and being successful in your work.

Thank you again for such an interesting day.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Gavin Jones

Lead Inspector