

# St Mark's Church of England Academy

Acacia Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1SF

## Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The academy continues to make rapid improvements, since the previous inspection. Both teaching and students' achievement are now good.
- The academy's values of love, hope and trust permeate the school strongly. They are reflected in students' good behaviour and attitudes toward learning.
- Students make good progress, and some make outstanding progress.
- The academy promotes students' personal development well.
- Students' successes, including their artistic work, are strongly celebrated, which encourages them further.
- Students feel safe and enjoy school. The head boy said, 'This is an academy that helps you to achieve your best, and one where you flourish.'
- Governance is outstanding. It gives clear and decisive support and guidance, and contributes strongly to the academy's success.
- Senior leaders are a key strength in this academy.
- The sixth form is good. Numbers of students are low but continue to grow. Students' achievement is good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of teaching is not yet consistently good or better. This limits students' progress and affects their attitudes to learning.
- Progress is not consistently outstanding across subjects including English and mathematics.
- Some middle leaders' actions to improve teaching further are not precise enough to be fully effective.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 39 lessons, observing 39 teachers. Eight lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Two feedback sessions given by members of the senior leadership team to teachers were observed. The team also conducted a series of brief observations of learning in classrooms and around the school.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and a representative of the academy's sponsor. Telephone conversations were conducted with a consultant acting as a school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors took account of the four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school and department improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour, tracking records of students' progress and examples of students' work. They looked at the school's attendance figures and monitoring information.

## Inspection team

Raymond Lau, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Gutman	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
Lisa Fraser	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Mark's is smaller than the average-sized secondary academy.
- The overwhelming majority of students are from minority ethnic heritages. The largest groups are from Black Caribbean, African and White British backgrounds. Many students speak English as an additional language. The number of girls in the academy is lower than boys.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high.
- The proportion of students supported by school action and by school action plus is well above average, with some experiencing specific and moderate learning difficulties, and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- Students' mobility is high. Higher proportions than usual do not start or complete their education at the academy.
- The academy specialises in science and performing arts and holds the Artsmark gold accreditation.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy sponsor is the CfBT.
- The academy is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Southwark.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to be outstanding overall by:
  - ensuring that all teaching is consistently good, with a higher proportion of outstanding teaching
  - preparing activities that are sufficiently demanding and tailored to meet the needs of all students, particularly the more able
  - improving students' behaviour and attitudes toward learning by giving them more opportunities to lead, be independent and collaborative in lessons.
- Increase the efficiency of the middle leaders by:
  - sharpening their ability to self-evaluate, with clear measures of success for their departments, including students' outcomes
  - increasing their skills so that they can support staff towards consistently outstanding teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students typically enter the academy with knowledge and skills that are significantly below national averages for their age. Throughout Key Stage 3, students' attainment rises. Students' reading improves quickly due to well-targeted interventions. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has improved since the previous inspection. Achievement in the academy's specialist subjects of performing arts and science continues to be good.
- For two years, attainment has increased sharply, noticeably in 2012. From a previously low position, it is now broadly average throughout the school, including in English and mathematics. Last year in English and mathematics, all students made at least the progress expected of them, and many exceeded it, with some students making outstanding progress. Students who arrive during the course of a year make good progress due to effective support. More able students make the progress expected of them.
- During the inspection, the majority of learners made good progress in lessons across a range of subjects. In a Year 11 religious education lesson, for example, students debated and justified their viewpoints on whether Christians had a duty to conserve the environment. Year 10 English students explored the relationship of Curley's wife to other characters in the novel, *Of Mice and Men*, with good knowledge and understanding.
- Girls achieve better than boys. In contrast, though, the gap between boys' achievement and what boys achieve nationally has significantly reduced, and their achievement is good. Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well, and those whose attendance is above average make notably good progress.
- Students supported by the extra money derived from the pupil premium achieve well. The funding is used to provide additional staffing in English and mathematics. As a result, these students have benefited from individual tutorial sessions. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress, as do students of ethnic minority heritages, in particular, those of Black African and Caribbean heritages.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form continues to improve. Results in 2012 indicate a rapid rise in attainment across the board, where previously there had been variations between subjects.
- Achievement is not outstanding because the proportion of students who make exceptional progress over time in English and mathematics, including the more able students, is not consistently high.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The senior leaders have focused successfully on improving teaching so that the large majority is now good or better. This is characterised by:
  - teachers' high expectations, reflected in the preparation of activities that match the needs of most students, and challenge them to do well
  - strong, positive relationships between teachers and students
  - effective questioning that enables students to think and reflect
  - the careful observation of students' developing understanding, so that tasks and explanations

can be reshaped immediately if necessary.

- A minority of lessons are outstanding, but this is not consistent throughout the academy. In outstanding lessons, teachers strive to 'go the extra mile'. For example, notable strengths in an outstanding physical education lesson in Year 11 were:
  - exceptional levels of mutual trust and respect that saw students working together collaboratively, leading to outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning
  - students' leadership and peer assessment, which were excellent, providing high quality feedback for the correction of actions
  - the teacher enabling students to take calculated risks, and challenging them to achieve more by personalising the work to suit each individual.
- Teaching is not outstanding because a small minority requires improvement, and a very small amount is inadequate. Such lessons included the following characteristics:
  - students' over-reliance on the teacher, causing the pace of sessions to slow down which resulted in students becoming passive or disengaged
  - work which did not match students' interests or challenge them to achieve. In particular, this related to those who were more able, who, on occasion, found the work too easy.
- The quality of assessment across the school is good. Teachers assess students' work effectively and provide good quality feedback. This enables the students to know and understand what they need to do or learn next. There is a strong focus on developing students' literacy skills across the academy. While speaking is a particular strength, teaching in all lessons is now rightly focusing on improving students' written skills.
- The provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. They receive effective, personalised support and intervention. This is also the case for other groups of students at risk of underachieving, such as those who arrive during the course of the year.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The academy has created an ethos of love, hope and trust within a culture of learning. The students are mainly respectful, and courteous to staff, visitors, and to each other. They behave well and are often thoughtful towards their peers. Teachers and students commented on how behaviour has improved due to a stricter behaviour management system and the establishment of shared values.
- The house system has made a significant contribution to students' wellbeing and academic success. For example, in a house assembly, a group of Year 7 students presented a drama sketch that was received well by older students, despite this type of activity being very new to them. There are several opportunities for student leadership. A number of pro-active prefects support the academy's day-to-day running very effectively.
- Students act as proud ambassadors, and work with local feeder primary schools to strengthen relationships; this has considerably aided students' contributions to the academy. A recent significant highlight was a visit by Her Royal Majesty the Queen as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, which celebrated the school's successes in a completely unique way.
- Students feel safe in and around the academy. They say that bullying is rare, but if it occurs, it is suitably dealt with by staff. Students have a good awareness of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations, including knowledge of the dangers of social networking and cyber-bullying.

- Students' attendance has improved. This is due to robust systems to follow up absence and promote good attendance, including establishing better links with parents. The significant number of students who enter and leave the academy at different times of the year affects the overall rate of attendance.
- Behaviour and safety is not outstanding. Most behaviour in lessons is good. However, students are not consistently given opportunities to be independent, creative, or collaborative, which limit their ability to be independent learners. Where behaviour was not good, this generally related to less effective teaching.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher provides strong and decisive leadership. He is supported well by an able senior leadership team and outstanding governance. The academy's sponsor has provided strong support in raising students' achievement by strengthening governance and deploying consultants to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Significant improvements since the previous inspection have strengthened the academy's promotion of equal opportunities and ensured that almost all groups of students succeed without discrimination. A clearer focus has been maintained on the performance of the various groups of students who are at risk of underachieving. Their progress is now carefully tracked and monitored in order to implement interventions quickly, and responsibility for their achievement has been devolved to middle leaders in the academy. Consequently, their achievement has improved.
- The management of teaching is good and has led to its consistent improvement. This has been achieved through the performance management of staff, professional development tailored to individuals' requirements and action research to identify best practice. The most effective teachers are used to improve colleagues' practice.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding. The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough and teaching is not consistently good. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school development plan focuses on priority areas. Nonetheless, not all of the departments' self-evaluation and development plans contribute effectively enough to this process or to improving achievement. Middle leaders are committed to school improvement and participate in and lead a range of improvement activities. However, they do not all focus clearly enough on supporting improvements in teaching in order to improve achievement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The Year 7 curriculum has been revised to include themes that effectively strengthen provision for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The Key Stage 4 curriculum appropriately blends academic and vocational routes. The academy reaches out to the local community and participates in numerous partnerships and projects that support learning, such as in performing arts.
- The curriculum includes wide-ranging opportunities for enrichment. For example, high-quality artwork is proudly displayed across the academy, and the choir rehearsed for an event with energy and enthusiasm. The academy has benefited from the installation of a popular BMX bike track. The sixth form continues to evolve by increasing both academic and vocational options.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - is outstanding because of members' expertise, particularly that of the Chair, which has led to strategic and decisive actions which have assisted the rapid improvement in achievement

- is very supportive, while also providing strong challenge, as reflected in the detailed analysis of students' performance
- has ensured that all statutory duties, including those to safeguard students, have been fully met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134003
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	406554

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	830
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	60
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geraldine Hutchinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Mallaband (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2010
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