

Inspection of St Mark’s Church of England Academy

Acacia Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1SF

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The principal of this school is Hannah Fahey. This school is part of Anthem Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mohsen Ojja, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jay Bhutani.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this school. Guided by the school's vision of 'transformation for all', leaders have the very highest expectations of all pupils. Staff go above and beyond to support pupils in all aspects of their education. Consequently, pupils achieve highly across the curriculum.

Pupils said the school's values of Love, Hope and Trust are 'not just words' but are demonstrated by all members of the community. Working relationships between staff and pupils are warm, caring and respectful. This means that pupils behave exceptionally well and are very happy and safe.

Staff and pupils are proud to be part of a close-knit school community that is working together for a common purpose. Parents and carers highly value the school's work. The school's cultural diversity is celebrated by all at every turn. For example, pupils from the school council talk proudly of their leadership of the recent culture days.

The school's work to develop pupils' character is exceptional. Pupils attend many clubs, including cooking, Korean, coding and keyboard. They take part in whole-school enrichment days involving trips to museums, outdoor activity centres and theatres. Students in the sixth form become prefects, raise money for local charities and support younger pupils with their learning in lessons.

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

The school has created an ambitious, focused and engaging curriculum across all subjects. Many pupils arrive with low reading ages or with English as an additional language. The school supports these pupils highly effectively. For instance, pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have recently arrived in the country join the school's 'SMART provision'. This develops pupils' English, learning of core subjects and key life skills. Many pupils then progress to the school's sixth form successfully. Leaders ensure that a focus on developing pupils' literacy is embedded throughout the curriculum. Depending on their needs, pupils receive targeted phonics teaching, fluency support or comprehension work. All pupils take part in regular 'drop everything and read' sessions to develop their love of reading.

The school has thought carefully about what pupils learn and in what order. For example, in English, pupils from Years 7 to 13 learn about three big ideas through connected literature: power and conflict, social responsibility and identity. For example, staff teach pupils about the irresponsible use of power in Macbeth or Othello. In mathematics, pupils learn about basic equations in Year 7, before studying equations with brackets in Year 8 and quadratic equations in Years 9 and 10. This means that pupils develop very strong mathematical foundations to solve mathematical problems confidently.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) swiftly. The school shares pupils' individual information with staff systematically. This helps teachers to ensure that appropriate and effective adaptations are put in place. As a result, pupils with SEND successfully access the ambitious curriculum.

Teachers are passionate subject experts. They introduce new knowledge and vocabulary skilfully. Teaching recaps on key subject content regularly to embed it in pupils' long-term memory. Staff check carefully that pupils understand what they have been taught before teaching new content. As a result, pupils' knowledge across the curriculum builds up deeply. A relentless drive for excellence and high aspiration for all continues into the sixth form.

Leaders have very high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons and their conduct around the school. Pupils meet these expectations very well. Any pupils who struggle with their behaviour are supported exceptionally well. Bullying is rare, but if it does happen, pupils know they can talk to an adult and it will be dealt with. Pupils' attendance is treated as a top priority. The school follows up any pupil's absence immediately. As a result, pupils' attendance at the school is very high.

All pupils, including those in the sixth form, benefit from a very high-quality programme of pastoral support called 'Lifeology'. They learn about important issues such as consent, puberty and how to stay safe. Every opportunity is taken to support pupils' character development, for example in assemblies, religious services or conversations in the corridor.

The careers programme is well structured from Year 7 onwards to ensure that pupils get the information they need. Leaders prepare pupils and students in the sixth form extremely well for the next stage of education, employment or training. Many students speak highly of the individual guidance and opportunities that leaders have sought for them.

Many staff said the school feels like a 'family'. They thrive as a result of the high-quality professional development provided by the school and trust. Leaders at all levels work well together and are committed to further improvement. Trust leaders and governors know and support the school very well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	134003
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10323361
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	922
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	102
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jay Bhutani
CEO of trust	Mohsen Ojja
Principal	Hannah Fahey
Website	www.stmarksacademy.com
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Anthem Schools Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Southwark. The school's last section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was in January 2024.
- Leaders make use of four registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical educational qualification and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 members of the school senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, computing and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subject areas.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 met with those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the school community council and the diocese.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Clemens	Ofsted Inspector

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