

St Mark's C of E Junior School

Equality Information

Introduction

"Education plays a key role in determining how you spend your adult life - a higher level of education means higher earnings, better health, and a longer life. By the same token, the long-term social and financial costs of educational failure are high. Those without the skills to participate socially and economically generate higher costs for health, income support, child welfare and social security systems."

St Mark's recognises the importance of education in creating life opportunities and recognises that the influence of school on a child's life is made more significant if they currently have, or have had in the past, a disadvantaged home life. This particular document concentrates on the most recent equalities-related attainment data and highlights those groups that are vulnerable to underachievement in Wiltshire schools. St Mark's is using this data to support its work to maximise the attainment of every pupil, and in particular, pupils from groups who may be vulnerable to educational underachievement. This document also details new national equality priorities and provides details about how St Mark's is responding to these.

Attainment and Progress – Wiltshire and National data

For most of the groups attainment is broadly in line with national results. In this document results are being highlighted where there is a county attainment gap compared with national results or where there is national and local concern about poor attainment for particular groups.¹

Race/Ethnicity

Lower Achieving Ethnic Groups

Nationally, the aggregated Black ethnic category remains the broad group with the lowest attainment both at Key Stage 2. This aggregated group includes the ethnic categories of Black African, Black Caribbean and Any Other Black Background.

A small black population in Wiltshire means that this school only infrequently has black pupils on its school role. However, this school is aware that across the county, the attainment of Black Caribbean pupils persistently falls behind the average achievement of their peers. St Mark's understands there are complex reasons for this and the steps we take to raise the attainment of these pupils will include: working closely with their parents/carers; ensuring expectations of their attainment remain high; understanding the impact of negative stereotyping (both in-school and out of school); helping the pupils to confidently navigate the stress that comes from being a visible minority in a mainly white school; closely monitoring pupil progress - as well as working with the pupil and their family to accelerate progress where appropriate.

In Wiltshire, White Eastern European pupils are a lower achieving group. Less than half achieve the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. These results are because a significant number of pupils are more recent migrants, and the majority have therefore not been in school in the UK from the Reception School Year.

Nationally, and in Wiltshire, the lowest performing ethnic group are Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils. In Wiltshire, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils significantly underperformed compared with the national statistics. Nationally, only a minority of pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Mathematics.

The barriers that prevent Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils participating and achieving at school are varied and complex, but this school is committed to working with individual pupils and their families to ensure every child receives maximum benefit from their time at school. St Mark's is aware of being able to access support and information from the Wiltshire Traveller Education Service, which provides specialist advice so that this school can make the adjustments necessary to support individual pupils and families from this community. In the past Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities were reluctant to allow their children to access mainstream primary education. This situation has been transformed in the last 10 to 15 years, and now the overwhelming majority of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller families in Wiltshire opt to send their children to primary school. This is a significant achievement. St Mark's works with our children, their families and local schools to ease the transition process to ensure all our Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils continue to engage with education throughout Key Stage 2 with their chosen junior school and then to secondary schools.

Higher Achieving Ethnic Groups

Nationally, and in Wiltshire, Chinese pupils are the highest achieving group and have been for some time.

Ethnicity and Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)

For more detailed information about what our school is doing to raise the attainment of these pupils, please refer to our Pupil Premium Strategy which is also published on this website. Our FSM children do not achieve as highly as non-FSM children. The reasons for this are complex and never straight forward. In the last two years we have been working hard to reduce the gap with some successes.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The attainment of children with a first language other than English (EAL) in Wiltshire continues to compare unfavourably both to figures for similar children elsewhere and to children whose first language is English (FLE). Furthermore, the gap between FLE and EAL attainment in Wiltshire is unusually large.

At St Mark's EAL learners have been one of our highest performing groups in recent years. In three of the last four years all EAL learners have met the expected standard for reading, writing and maths. The relatively poor attainment of Wiltshire's EAL learners in overall KS2 data is very largely a product of poor attainment in Reading. This group has been doing badly in this area for

several years, and evidence seems to suggest that the problem is deepening. In contrast, attainment in Writing is comparable to similar groups elsewhere, and attainment in Maths is good. Wiltshire primary schools are working hard to address this issue in partnership with the local authority's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS). The team has provided joint training to school leaders in recent years, and the EMAS team have produced resources for teachers designed to highlight the issue and provide ideas and inspiration for teaching Reading comprehension to EAL learners in the classroom. Both teams provide advisory support to schools, and EMAS also provide bilingual staff who can help facilitate access for children in the early stages of learning English.

At St Mark's we have previously engaged with EMAS to ensure we provide our children and their families with EAL, the highest possible level of support. Our staff have received excellent training from EMAS and they are actively encouraged to attend the network meetings provided by the local authority throughout the year.

Gender (Protected Characteristic 'Sex')

Girls outperform boys on all the primary subjects except for Mathematics.

Progress from KS1 at Wyndham Park Infants' School

Approximately 98% of children transfer from Wyndham Park to St Mark's as they move from KS1 to KS2. Children leave Y2 broadly in line with national and Wiltshire averages.

Disability/SEN (Special Educational Needs)

Every school is required to identify and address the SEND needs of the pupils that they support. Information about the support provided by St Mark's for pupils with special education needs and for disabled pupils is detailed in the SEN section of the school website.

Disabled Pupils and SEN Pupils – Attainment Data

There is an increasing understanding of the negative impact of social, emotional, and mental health difficulties (SEMH) on the educational attainment of pupils. The incorporation of mental health into the Equality Act 2010 has helped to highlight this important issue.

Religion and Belief

Data is collected on admission for religion and belief but we do not currently track how children from each group performs and neither is it a requirement for entry into this Church of England primary school. St Mark's recognises how important faith and belief can be as part of a young person's developing identity, whether this relates to a specific faith or belief, or whether this relates to wider belief systems, morals and ethics. St Mark's is committed to supporting all our young people as they develop a personal relationship with their own values and beliefs, and to supporting, in the context of the Human Rights agenda, the role this plays in the moral and ethical choices they make in life. This school takes incidents of prejudice-related bullying seriously and is committed to working closely with parents/carers to create a school environment which is nurturing, friendly and supportive for all our children. Our school has established a procedure for recording all incidents of prejudice-based bullying, and this includes bullying relating to religion

and belief. Wiltshire LA Anti-bullying Guidance specifically states that Religious Bullying can be identified as 'a negative or unfriendly focusing on religious difference or how somebody expresses their faith'. This school is vigilant in maintaining an awareness of, and appropriate responses to, this possibility. St Mark's is aware that negative faith-based media attention can have an impact on all children, and recognises the importance of ensuring that pupils are provided with accurate and appropriate information.

St Mark's ensures all pupils gain knowledge of and respect for the different faiths in Britain as part of our role to prepare pupils for modern life in a diverse Britain. As part of a whole school activity, pupils celebrate different religious festivals and learn from religious representatives from various communities. We recognise that discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief is a global concern, and our school actively promotes tolerance and respect.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Gender Identity is a comparatively new area for schools but this Protected Characteristic identifies a small section of society as vulnerable to discrimination and inequality. Gender Identity was included in equality legislation for the first time in 2010, and many schools, parents, as well as wider society, are learning about the issues for the first time. Schools in Wiltshire access expert advice and support from:

- Local Authority (via Safeguarding)
- Mermaids (Charity)
- other schools.

St Mark's recognises that Gender Identity is a complex area and that children, young people and their families are navigating an equality area where best practice is not fixed, and where the central advice is to be 'led by the child'. This school is committed to ensuring that all our children feel safe while at school and that each child is given the chance to develop their unique identity with support from teaching and support staff, and their peers. Pupils are taught that families come in many different forms and include single-parent; grandparent-led; same-sex parents; step-families; foster families; families who have adopted children etc. Our pupils understand that although families can be very different, what matters is that everyone in a family loves and cares for each other.

This school recognises that negative views within wider society about LGBT+ people can have a detrimental effect on pupil wellbeing. Data from Childline and anecdotal information from CAMHS (serving Wiltshire children) show that increasing numbers of children in primary schools are raising issues relating to gender identity and sexual orientation. Gender Identity and sexual orientation are not mental health concerns but many of the referrals received by CAMHS for young people with issues related to their gender identity or sexual orientation are linked to bullying, isolation and internalised negative views about LGBT+ people, that in turn impacts on their emotional and mental health. This school recognises that pupils with these issues are better signposted to school-based counsellors or school support groups and national websites such as Young Minds. CAMHS is encouraging of primary schools who can provide such support to their

pupils, as dealing effectively with these issues at a younger age appears to reduce the more serious mental health issues presented by some LGBT+ secondary school pupils.

Equality Objectives

Schools are required to update their published Equality Information each year, and in addition, must have **at least one Equality Objective** that the school can focus and work on for a period of up to four years. The suggested equality objectives below have been developed to reflect current priorities. We have chosen an equality objective that meets the needs of our particular school community.

Objective 1 - Increase understanding of religious/faith diversity

Another current focus for St Mark's is to ensure that our pupils understand and appreciate the rich diversity of Britain and the important values that help people with differing perspectives and outlooks to live together harmoniously. This document provides information about what we are doing to develop our pupils' ability to live in a pluralistic (diverse) society. Our assemblies, religious education and personal, social, health and economic education lessons are planned to support this understanding and to encourage deeper thinking about wider society in our families, class, school and our local community. Each year our school and locality becomes more diverse and it is our intention to promote the appreciation and valuing of both our similarities and differences. We endeavour to increase understanding of religious/faith diversity (including people who do not have a faith) and to develop an awareness of the history of religious intolerance in Britain and Europe, and to learn to promote tolerance and understanding.

Objective Two - Pupil mental health and well-being

Academic attainment is important, but pupils also need to progress through their education feeling happy and self-confident. St Mark's is committed to providing a nurturing environment to help develop the resilience of our pupils to cope with the ups and downs and stresses of everyday life. Growth mindset and the related philosophy are a key belief at St Mark's. We actively promote a growth mindset and positive approach to life-long learning. Our school promotes the idea that our brains need to grow and develop without fear of making mistakes or being so risk averse that we don't all reach our full potential. We wish to promote our school as a safe place where we treat each child as an individual, ensuring they feel happy or receive support if they are not. A happy child can learn, an unhappy child cannot. Our job is to ensure they receive a range of opportunities to help them find their way whilst coping with challenges that are often beyond their control. Our personal, social, health and education lessons are specifically planned to promote and encourage well-being. St Mark's has decided that one of our new Equality Objectives will address pupil mental health and wellbeing as part of our commitment to preventing mental health difficulties that may start in childhood but have a greater impact in adult life.
