

St Martin's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110038
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	378039
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Mubanga
Headteacher	Madeleine Cosgrove
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Paul Edwards

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed ten lessons taught by six teachers and listened to pupils reading. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at governing body minutes, the systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, pupils' work, and teachers' planning and marking. The inspector took note of the questionnaires completed by 109 parents and carers and those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Martin's is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, who come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, is similar to that seen nationally. A lower-than-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that seen nationally. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school meets the government floor standard. All teaching staff are new to the school since the previous inspection and there have been a number of recent appointments.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is a good school. The key to the school's success and its significant improvement is the particularly strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders, that is improving teaching and ensuring pupils are provided with a rich, vibrant and stimulating curriculum. The school is not outstanding because teaching is not leading to pupils' consistently rapid and sustained progress in all classes across the school.
- Achievement is good because all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress. After a good start in the Reception class, pupils continue to make good progress which is rapidly accelerated in upper Key Stage 2, so that they attain high standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Pupils' handwriting and presentation do not always match these otherwise high standards.
- Pupils' high level of attendance is testament to their great enjoyment for learning. This enthusiasm makes a significant contribution to their progress and high attainment. They feel very safe and behave exceptionally well, both in lessons and at break times. Pupils are really appreciative of the opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning but also for the support provided by staff.
- Overall, teaching is good. There is some outstanding practice. Pupils' work is marked well with clear steps identified for improvement. Activities are challenging. Occasionally, teachers spend too long explaining tasks and do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities for writing at greater length in other subjects.
- Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance by senior leaders are thorough and rigorous. Strong, supportive, but challenging, governance contributes to the school's excellent capacity to sustain improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- During the current academic year, raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring teachers consistently provide a better balance between the time they spend on explaining activities to pupils and the time given to completing tasks
 - ensuring teachers plan more opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects
 - raising teachers' expectations as to the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation skills so that they match the high quality of other work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt their children were making good progress, and the inspection found that all groups of pupils were making good progress in each year. Exceptional progress in the upper junior classes results in high attainment in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Girls have traditionally attained better than boys in their writing but the gap between them has narrowed significantly; the result of more opportunities for boys to write on subjects that interest them. For example, a number of boys demonstrated their enthusiasm when talking about the Second World War project as part of their history work. This generated good pieces of writing. Occasionally, the enthusiasm of pupils for writing results in handwriting that is not as neat and well presented as it should be.

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are similar to those expected for their age. Consistently good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides the children with a strong base for further learning and their attainment is above average on entry to Year 1. Well-structured activities enable them to learn about the world around them, and the strong emphasis on developing speaking and listening and social skills is particularly successful. Reading skills are above average in Year 2. There is good evidence to show that these skills have been maintained because younger children are taught a range of strategies, including developing a good knowledge of letters and sounds, which provide them with the skills they need to work out unfamiliar or difficult words. Reading skills improve to exceptionally high levels by Year 6; pupils talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about books, and their reading matter is challenging but enjoyable. As one pupil said, 'I could read for hours'.

Early interventions for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and well-planned in-class support, ensure they progress and attain better than their peers nationally. Teachers have high expectations of what these pupils are capable of achieving and this helps their particularly good progress. The small number of

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pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language make rapid gains in learning English; the result of well-organised support and close links between home and school leading to an effective 'learning partnership' that aids their learning well.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good and is underpinned by an extremely rich curriculum. As a result, pupils make at least good progress. Adults foster excellent relationships with pupils, which form a backdrop for an extremely positive climate for learning. Teachers have high expectations and use their strong subject knowledge to structure activities and make learning accessible for all pupils. They are particularly good at questioning pupils and encouraging them to explain their thinking. For example, in an outstanding Year 6 numeracy lesson, pupils of differing abilities took turns in explaining to the class how they had solved percentage problems. They made use of the large whiteboard and explained with such confidence that it aided the learning of other pupils. In their enthusiasm, teachers occasionally spend too long explaining the detail of tasks, limiting the opportunity for pupils to work on their planned activities. Although there are opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills in other subjects, teachers occasionally miss opportunities to encourage them to write at length.

Typically, the needs of all pupils are well met because planning clearly builds on the pupils' prior learning and understanding. It ensures that learning is challenging and addresses any weaknesses in learning for all groups of pupils. In lessons, teachers correct any misunderstandings that arise through strong oral guidance. Other adults are usefully employed in a variety of situations to support pupils' learning and help them to catch up, for example, in small group writing activities. The use of assessment to improve achievement in both English and mathematics has improved considerably recently and rigorous use of targets makes clear to pupils what they should be achieving. In most aspects, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work but they do not always place sufficient emphasis on presentation and in improving handwriting skills.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very successfully, both through the curriculum and through a wide range of enrichment activities. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect through prayer during mass and acts of collective worship. Pupils are very passionate about fair trading and talk confidently and knowledgeably about the unfairness in payments surrounding coffee bean, tea, and banana growers. Pupils consider issues around recycling and have a good awareness of different cultures and religions. Almost all parents and carers feel that their children are well taught and, therefore, prepared well for the future. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents and carers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is outstanding. Pupils' questionnaires and discussions show that this is their normal behaviour. They are

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very polite and friendly to their peers and staff, and extremely respectful towards visitors. Their excellent behaviour in lessons helps their learning and they cooperate well. For example, during a Key Stage 2 physical education lesson, behaviour was exemplary as they worked in pairs and groups to complete a number of gymnastic moves. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the behaviour in school with many commenting on the high quality of care and how well their children are supported. The inspection evidence supports these views.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure at school and say that there is no bullying or significant bad behaviour. This is borne out by the school's records over time. The 'Rights Respecting School' agenda helps to ensure pupils' views are taken into account. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter school happily and punctually, developing good social skills and habits for the future. A strong focus on routines, a well-structured day and very well-planned opportunities to learn and play together help prepare children well for Year 1. Determined efforts are made to ensure all pupils are safe and able to learn well. Training for staff in child protection is wide-ranging and detailed. Staff ensure pupils are aware of the dangers of computer misuse and cyber bullying. Pupils talk knowledgeably about such issues. Older pupils are aware of the problems that occur with social networking sites.

Leadership and management

Leaders at all levels are highly effective and fully committed to driving and maintaining the rate of improvement. Despite high attainment, there is no hint of complacency. While there is a rigorous approach to raising pupils' achievement, there is a determination that pupils should enjoy their learning. The views of one parent were typical of many when commenting: 'Our child is very happy at school and he has made excellent progress. We have nothing but praise for the staff who have made enormous efforts to enrich his life.'

There is a rigorous approach to checking the quality of teaching from senior leaders. Subject leaders check the performance of pupils regularly. Very well-targeted professional development has successfully improved the quality of teaching with less experienced staff benefiting from high-quality mentoring and coaching. The school monitors the progress of pupils with precision and is using data purposefully to drive up achievement. These improvements demonstrate clearly the school's capacity for continued improvement.

Art and dance receive high priority within the well-balanced curriculum. Alongside an excellent range of visits and visitors to the school, these experiences promote pupils' love for learning, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, well. The curriculum promotes pupils' awareness of other cultures and faiths very effectively. The school engages parents and carers extremely well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, parents and carers are able to contribute to children's assessments, and parents and carers comment that they feel welcome to come into any class. There are very strong partnerships with other schools, for example a number of more-able Year 6 mathematicians are taught regularly at the local

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secondary school, enhancing their skills even further. The governing body supports the school well. It has a good understanding of the school's priorities for development. The governors use the information about pupils' achievement well to hold school leaders to account.

Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are tackled decisively, so no group falls behind others. The inclusion manager keeps a very close eye on the progress of all pupils to ensure there is no discrimination. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are extremely well integrated into the life of the school. Staff expect these pupils to achieve well, and they do. The progress of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds is monitored closely with early and effective interventions. This means equal opportunities are promoted extremely well. The school is a safe, secure environment and the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martin's Catholic Primary School, Reading, RG4 6SS

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when I visited your school recently. I appreciated the time taken by some of you to talk and read to me. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at playtimes, and seeing how you clearly enjoy school. St Martin's is a good school and these are some of the things I found.

- You behave exceptionally well, both in lessons and in the playground, and this helps to ensure you feel really safe. Your attendance is higher than that seen in most schools.
- Children in the Reception class learn well and this helps them as they get older.
- You make good progress throughout the school so that your skills in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers provide you with interesting activities and you have many visits, visitors and clubs that make learning more exciting.
- You are very keen to help those who are less fortunate than yourselves. You have a very good understanding of right and wrong, and a very good understanding of people from other cultures and backgrounds.
- Those in charge of the school provide very strong leadership and are working hard to make the school even better.

To make the school better, I have asked the headteacher and governors to ensure more teaching becomes outstanding, and to do this by giving you more opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects, by ensuring teachers do not spend too long explaining tasks to you, and by making sure your handwriting and presentation matches the quality of your other work.

All of you can help by really trying hard with your handwriting and presentation of work.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards
Lead inspector

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