

William Martin CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School, Harlow

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115101
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357697
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Katherine Beck

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Albert Watson
Headteacher	Liz Kinsella
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Five teachers were observed teaching eight lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's procedures to safeguard children. In addition inspectors looked at pupils' work, the school development plan, the school's procedures for self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and attainment, minutes of the governing body, reports by the school improvement partner, attendance records, evidence of provision in the Nursery and the results from questionnaires from staff and 46 parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The quality of teaching to check the provision for pupils of differing abilities.
- Improvements to leadership and management since the last inspection and how they are impacting on pupils' achievements.
- The school's self-evaluation procedures.
- Developments to the curriculum and how these are helping pupils to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding year on year.

Information about the school

The school is similar in size to other schools of this type. The majority of pupils are White British, while others come from a diversity of minority ethnic groups, particularly Chinese and Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities or learning English as an additional language is lower than in most schools. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average.

The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery and two Reception classes. Children join the Nursery at the age of three and attend part-time for three hours either in the morning or in the afternoon. They start in Reception in the month of September or January in the year in which they become five. The Nursery was closed for refurbishment at the time of the inspection and re-opened the day after the inspection was completed.

At the age of seven, pupils transfer to the junior school that shares the same site.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

William Martin is a good school where pupils' individual needs are at the heart of all its work. Parents, especially those who have children with special educational needs, are very supportive of the way the school cares for their children and helps them to learn. They appreciate the good care, guidance and support offered and the attention paid to keeping pupils safe. The school's strong focus on enabling all pupils to play a full part in all that the school has to offer, and helping them to overcome any barriers to their learning, is supported by close partnerships with parents and other agencies. These partnerships allow the school to understand the pupils' needs effectively and arrange, where necessary, appropriate support for pupils and their families.

There are many interesting activities for pupils to enjoy each day. Pupils are keen to get to school and attend regularly. They behave well, learn to adopt healthy lifestyles and show respect and care for one another. They work collaboratively and share resources happily. Pupils are confident to make decisions, try out new ideas and learn from their mistakes. In lessons, pupils ask good questions that help them to understand what they are learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is enhanced significantly in the high quality assemblies. This contributes much to the happy atmosphere in school. Pupils raise money for those less fortunate than themselves, but they have very little understanding of the way people live in other parts of the world.

The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes make a good start and develop key skills that will underpin their learning as they grow older. Pupils make good progress in Year 1 and Year 2 and attainment is average by the time they leave. A new and innovative curriculum, which takes into account pupils' views, has been implemented in the past year to raise attainment. The new curriculum has enabled staff to develop a wide range of teaching methods, which they use in cooperation with the teaching assistants to meet pupils' differing needs effectively. Much good practice is underway, but agreed changes have yet to be implemented consistently in all year groups. Pupils' progress is assessed each half term, but on a day-to-day basis staff do not give pupils sufficient feedback about what they do well and what they need to do to improve to enhance their rate of progress.

The school's good capacity to improve stems from the ambition of the leaders, managers, governors and staff to provide a high quality of education and enable pupils to do their very best. To this end they are taking determined action. Recent changes to the way in which leadership and management are organised have been designed to drive improvement, by enabling all staff to develop their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Teams led by middle managers include staff from each of the year groups, so that they contribute their expertise to the changes and have a clear understanding of the quality of provision throughout the school. All staff are held

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accountable for pupils' progress from the Nursery to Year 2. Too little attention is paid by all leaders and managers to evaluating the changes for their full impact on pupils' attainment and progress. While the school promotes community cohesion within the immediate locality well, it has not drawn up an action plan to enhance pupils' learning about the way other children live and learn nationally and in other parts of the world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment by:
 - making sure that all staff are giving pupils clear information about what they are doing well and what they need to do next
 - evaluating the changes to the curriculum from Nursery to Year 2, in March and July 2011, to check the impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Increase pupils' understanding of the different ways in which children in other parts of the country or abroad live and learn by:
 - writing a community cohesion action plan that includes ideas on helping pupils to make good links with schools nationally or in other parts of the world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In recent years, attainment at the end of Year 2 has fluctuated between above average and broadly average depending on the variation in pupils' starting points. Lesson observations and assessment information indicate that attainment is broadly average in the current Year 2. This represents good and in some cases better progress since pupils start school with attainment lower than that usually found at age three.

Pupils' progress has been consistently good over the last few years. Pupils with special educational needs, English as an additional language, those from minority ethnic groups or known to be eligible for free school meals as well as the higher attainers make good progress. Support in lessons or sessions designed to help pupils with special educational needs learn the basic skills they require is effective. Staff encourage pupils to use their initiative and have the confidence to try out their ideas independently. Activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities and a curriculum that helps to build on skills learned each year also support this good progress.

Pupils enjoy being at school because they know their efforts and ideas are valued. They appreciate the opportunities they have to contribute to the school community through 'Children's Voice'. Their ideas have been incorporated into the design for new playground equipment and the curriculum. Pupils know how to be healthy and enjoy taking part in additional physical activity on the trim trail. They are looking forward to when the new play equipment is ready for use. Good behaviour allows pupils to learn in a happy atmosphere.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Staff use a wide range of teaching methods to capture pupils' interest in learning. They draw on pupils' own ideas, relate the work to their everyday life and encourage them to ask questions that deepen their understanding. Most teachers make clear to the pupils what it is they are to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson. In their planning, teachers make appropriate provision for the different abilities within the class. Staff provide good resources that support pupils' learning. For example, pupils know where to go or look in the classroom to find the words they want to use in their writing or the resources to help them complete their maths work accurately. Teachers work well with teaching assistants who have been trained in the best way to support pupils effectively, whatever their ability or background, allowing them to think things through for themselves. Relationships between the adults and pupils are good and this too promotes pupils' confidence in their learning.

Staff assess pupils' progress informally throughout the lessons, checking on how well they are achieving the task set. They do not explain to pupils sufficiently what they need to do to improve their work. Marking is limited and comments are not always written in a way that pupils' can read or understand. Staff meet together regularly to review the progress of each pupil. Where underachievement is identified, action is taken immediately to enable pupils to catch up or overcome the barriers to their learning.

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The curriculum, based on six key areas of learning rather than individual subjects, is engaging pupils in their learning and ensuring a smooth transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Year 1. An overall curriculum map guides what pupils will learn year on year. It is innovative as it allows for adaptation to take into account pupils' requests and interests. For example, a pupil can say, 'I want to learn about... insects' and staff adapt plans to these interests developing knowledge, thinking and problem-solving skills across all the areas of learning. This, together with the strong focus on the development of skills in questioning and communicating in an articulate manner, gives pupils confidence in tackling new learning situations. At present there is a strong focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing using an innovative approach linked to 'story mountains'. This is helping pupils to write creatively and imaginatively, but the full impact on their level of attainment has not been evaluated. The curriculum is enriched by visits out and visitors to the school. In addition, many pupils enjoy taking part in school clubs such as games, signing, Spanish and choir.

The school's close links with outside agencies, support services and parents underpin the good care guidance and support it offers to all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable. These links enable the school to work collaboratively with parents to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning. For example, by working with the parents, the school has enabled three pupils, who were at risk of becoming persistent absentees, to attend regularly.

Arrangements to help pupils settle into school, move between Reception and Year 1, and from the infant to the junior school are considered carefully to ensure pupils are well informed and experience a smooth transition. Reception teachers sometimes take the same pupils in Year 1. Visits, before starting in the Nursery, help children to settle quickly. Close links with the junior school, some staff work in both schools, assist continuity of provision, especially for pupils needing additional support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Plans to raise attainment are ambitious. The headteacher and governors ensure that middle managers, as well as other staff, play a vital role in introducing new ways of working and in identifying further key areas for development. All staff are held responsible for pupils' progress. This is a significant change since the last inspection and has not been easy for all staff to accept. That said all staff are focussed on doing their best for the pupils. Professional development and training linked to the changes are underway to enhance skills in teaching, learning, leadership and management. Procedures to evaluate

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the changes to the curriculum are not yet robust enough to give a full picture of their impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment.

The governing body is fully supportive of the school, challenging decisions, such as the changes to the curriculum to ensure they are made in the best interests of the pupils. Its policies and procedures ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Staff training in child protection is up to date and adults working with pupils have been recruited and vetted appropriately. Consequently, pupils say that they feel safe in school and know they can ask any adult for help. The decision to employ a significant number of teaching assistants is successful in enabling pupils to make good progress. The governing body is not involved sufficiently in monitoring and evaluation procedures to gain a full understanding of the impact of changes to provision on pupils' attainment.

Partnerships with parents and outside agencies are effective in supporting pupils' learning and personal development. The school places the interests of every pupil at the centre of its work enabling them to achieve well. Community cohesion within the locality is promoted well through the school's links with the church, different faith groups and other organisations. The lack of a community cohesion action plan limits opportunities for pupils to develop contacts with schools nationally and globally and to understand how children live and learn in countries different from their own.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children, often with low starting points, make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good leadership and management mean considerable work has been done since the last inspection to enable staff in the Nursery and Reception years to work closely together. They plan an enjoyable curriculum that develops children's knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas of learning. This curriculum takes fully into account the

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children's needs and interests and makes the most of opportunities to learn indoors as well as outdoors. High expectations, along with a range of engaging activities, mean children establish positive attitudes to learning at an early stage.

Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage are fully involved in the innovative changes being made to the curriculum across the school. Changes in the Nursery and Reception have been shown during the inspection to have had an impact on learning. While attainment overall is below the national average, more children in 2010 reached the national average across the six areas of learning than in 2008 or 2009. Analysis of data indicates that the strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal, social and emotional development and skills in communication and thinking is proving successful as children meet or exceed the national picture in these aspects. Children's skills in calculation, writing and knowledge of letters and sounds are below the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage leaders together with the staff are focussing on the ways to improve the outcomes for the children in these areas and how children's skills can be built on as they move through the school.

Staff are experienced in working with children of this age. They know the children well through their frequent observations and adapt tasks or activities to take into account their needs. They enable children, including those with special educational needs, to communicate clearly, become independent, make decisions and think for themselves. They know when to interact with children while they are playing and help them to develop their ideas or learn something new.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who returned the questionnaire are happy with their children's experiences in the school. In particular, they are pleased that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and are taught well. These views were similar to those found during the inspection. Individual issues noted on the questionnaires sent to inspectors were discussed with the headteacher as part of the overall inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Martin CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School, Harlow to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	59	16	35	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	50	22	48	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	26	30	65	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	37	23	50	4	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	43	25	54	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	33	28	61	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	46	24	52	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	37	25	54	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	39	24	52	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	33	24	52	3	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	27	26	58	4	9	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	17	37	25	54	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	48	23	50	0	0	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



15 September 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of William Martin CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School, Harlow, CM18 6PN

Thank you for giving us a warm welcome when we visited your school recently. You were very friendly and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you. You told us that you like to come to school, feel safe and that everyone looks after you and listens to you if you need help. Your parents told us that they are happy that you attend William Martin.

You go to a good school. All the grown-ups teach you how to behave well, and how to be polite and helpful to each other and keep healthy. You make good progress in learning about mathematics and how to read during your time at the school. You are learning to write interesting stories and you ask your teachers good questions so that they help you to understand what you are learning. Everyone at the school wants to help you to do the very best that you can. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- make sure that all the grown-ups you work with in lessons tell you what you are doing well and what you need to do next
- check that the changes that have been made to what you learn every day are helping you to do your very best
- write a plan with ideas on how to help you make good links with schools in other parts of the country or the world so that you understand some of the many different ways that children live and learn.

We know you will continue to enjoy all the fun things that there are to do, help your teachers and try to do as well as you can all the time.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Beck

Lead inspector

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