

St Martin's C E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114539
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	378883
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2012
Lead inspector	Wendy Forbes

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Townend
Headteacher	Joanne Smith
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 November 2008
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Wendy Forbes

Additional inspector

Roger Parry

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed thirteen lessons taught by nine teachers, amounting to approximately seven hours in total. Additional visits to classes focused on provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and included visits to seven small group support sessions. For all of the observations of teaching and learning and throughout the scrutiny of pupils' work, inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the school's inclusion coordinator. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and managers, members of the governing body, and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and policies. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and analysed questionnaires returned by 104 parents and carers and 91 pupils. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school with a Nursery class providing 50 part-time places in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Their main needs are emotional, behavioural and speech and language.

Since the last inspection the school has experienced a period of staff change with the appointment of a number of temporary staff including an interim acting headteacher and deputy headteacher. A substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2010 and September 2011 respectively.

The school meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Since the last inspection, the school has enhanced its facilities with the provision of a new library. The school has recently achieved the Artsmark (Gold) award. It also runs a daily early morning drop-off club.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils, parents and carers agree that it is a happy, caring and safe environment. The school is not yet outstanding because there are occasions when a few teachers do not provide activities that fully extend and challenge every individual, particularly the more able, in developing their problem-solving or creative-writing skills. Marking does not always make it clear how pupils can improve their work. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is, therefore, sometimes slower than in reading.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Because teaching, the curriculum and leadership have all strengthened since the last inspection, pupils make good progress, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, information about the youngest children is not routinely gathered and analysed on entry. This means progress of these children is initially slower than it might be.
- Well-focused actions have secured improvements in teaching so the quality is now consistently good. Lessons are planned well and the pace of learning is good. All this means that pupils make good progress, particularly in reading in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, characterised by positive attitudes to learning, courtesy and above-average attendance. The school provides well-tailored support for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and for those whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable. Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted well. Very effective partnerships enhance pupils' learning and help pupils to succeed.
- Senior leaders provide robust and clear leadership for the school, resolutely focused on raising attainment. As a result, the school has moved forward well since the last inspection. This determination and effective leadership of teaching ensure the quality is constantly improved. Well-established procedures for the management of performance set the direction and give impetus to

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sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics and improve the achievement of the more able pupils by December 2012, by:
 - ensuring that the level of challenge in all lessons is matched to the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able
 - providing more opportunities to extend pupils' literacy competencies by writing for a wider range of purposes
 - ensuring that work offers enough challenge to develop pupils' problem-solving skills
 - ensuring that marking provides a clear picture to pupils of how well they are doing and what to do next to improve.
- Ensure information about children's needs is routinely gathered and analysed on entry to the Nursery to provide greater challenge in learning and development and get children's learning off to a brisk start.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's skills on entry are well below those expected for their age, particularly in speech and language. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of consistently good teaching and curriculum opportunities. However, information about the youngest children is not routinely gathered or analysed on entry. Initial progress is therefore slower than it might be because activities do not always provide sufficient challenge. However, children's progress accelerates in the Reception because of strengths in teaching, stimulating activities and very effective support, which ensure any gaps in learning are swiftly closed.

Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum ensure pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school, enjoying their learning. This view is endorsed by the vast majority of respondents to the parents' and carers' questionnaire who said how pleased they were with their children's current progress and desire to learn.

The quality of learning and progress seen in lessons is typically good. Enthusiastic teaching and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning contribute well to their good progress. For example, in a Year 5 numeracy lesson, pupils enjoyed the teacher's energetic presentation, bringing alive pupils' knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and developing their understanding of the shapes' properties and how to group them. Well-focused questioning and the teacher's good subject knowledge helped

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pupils to understand how to develop the skills needed to group and sort 'shape data' using a Carroll diagram.

Reading attainment has improved. By the end of Key Stage 1, it is just below average but improving rapidly. By the time they leave the school, pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment in mathematics and English overall and above average in reading. This is the result of consistently good teaching and a successful focus on the development of literacy skills. The systematic teaching of letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 ensures children make good progress developing early reading and writing skills. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy books, linking their reading to written work to reinforce their literacy skills. Writing and mathematics have not improved at the same rate because work is not always as well matched to pupils' differing needs, particularly those of the more able.

National test results in 2011 suggested boys achieve higher than girls. Inspection evidence confirmed this gap has been closed for current Year 6 pupils. Improvements in the use of assessment data to track pupils' achievements and set targets have had a positive impact on achievement. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs progress as well as their peers because staff make suitable adjustments to materials and activities to meet their learning needs.

Quality of teaching

Rigorous monitoring and carefully-targeted staff development have strengthened teaching so it is now typically good. Parents and carers agree their children are well taught. Teachers and other adults in classrooms have good relationships with pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. As one said, '...we always have fun in our class...' Inspectors agree. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils could hardly wait to experience the excitement of their 'fox hunt' as they recounted their story map before heading off across the playground, hot on the trail of the fox. The teacher's enthusiastic explanation and good questioning, a common strength of much of the teaching, ensured pupils knew how to achieve success.

Pupils are well motivated, taking responsibility for their learning. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils made good progress in developing their knowledge of shape because of well-focused questioning and collaborative partner work, which provided opportunities to explore the properties of various shapes. As another lesson seen in Year 2 showed, learning is best when pupils are motivated and challenged. Pupils used 'powerful' verbs and 'interesting' adjectives to good effect to strengthen their creative writing. Effective use of a visualiser helped children evaluate their writing, promoting independent learning skills.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to ensure that lessons are well planned and provide stimulating, interesting experiences. This contributes significantly to the successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and ensures that activities meet the broad range of needs and take

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good account of the diversity in the school. Consequently, many pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable overcome barriers to learning. The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is successfully organised. Teachers plan suitable work to help them make good progress; teaching assistants have clear guidance about what they are helping pupils to achieve.

A wide range of adult-directed and child-initiated activities promotes independent learning throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enjoy opportunities to investigate the world around them as seen in a Reception class as children enjoyed hunting for mini-beasts. There was much excitement as tiny eggs were discovered in an earth tray and as children discussed how they would develop into fully fledged creatures. Children are encouraged to assess how well they are doing. As one child said, 'It's alright to make mistakes because that's the way you learn.'

Systematic teaching of reading skills throughout the school has ensured pupils develop reading skills more rapidly. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to write for a wide range of purposes and to develop their problem-solving skills. Not all work set presents an equally effective challenge to enhance learning, particularly for the more able in writing and mathematics. Pupils' work is regularly marked; however, not all marking helps pupils to know how they can improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by good behaviour, improved attendance and positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, pupils are well behaved, listen carefully and work hard. Excellent pastoral care and support help pupils develop good personal skills and feel very safe. Pupils throughout the school are very welcoming and interested in visitors. Inspectors were impressed by pupils' courtesy and were frequently asked if they were enjoying their day.

Pupils understand about different types of bullying and know how to respond to any difficulties, such as cyber-bullying. They are confident there is no bullying and that any incidences of bad behaviour are effectively dealt with by the school. A very few parents and carers expressed a concern that their children's lessons are very occasionally disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. However, the vast majority of parents and carers endorse inspection findings that behaviour is typically good over time and report that the school works effectively to resolve any pupils' difficulties. They also believe that their children are kept very safe in school. Pupils also affirm that the good behaviour seen first hand during the inspection is typical. For individuals who find difficulty in conforming to the school's high behavioural expectations, the school employs relevant strategies, including calling on external individuals or agencies for their expertise. These actions are usually most effective in resolving difficulties.

Leadership and management

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The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have shown determination in securing improvements in the school and bringing about stability in staffing. The headteacher's purposeful approach encourages others to have the highest aspirations. There is a strong sense of purpose. Self-evaluation is clearly focused on the correct priorities and stems from an effective programme of monitoring and analysis. A planned programme of professional development and performance management has led to improvements in teaching and achievement, eradicating previous weaknesses. Consequently, the school demonstrates the capacity for sustained improvement.

Subject leaders play an effective role in monitoring the work of the school. The evaluation of pupils' progress data has intensified with further refinements in tracking performance. Outcomes are carefully considered by teachers and subject leaders on a regular basis and inform actions to raise achievement. The school's close monitoring of progress and the rapid action taken, should any underachievement be identified, ensure all pupils have equal opportunity to achieve well. The school has good systems for identifying groups and individuals who need additional support and uses these successfully to provide appropriate strategies to accelerate their learning. The governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement because the governors are actively involved and rigorously challenge the school.

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well and plays a major part in engaging them in learning. It has been effectively reviewed to create opportunities for more links across all subject areas. Curriculum strengths such as the arts, reflected in the school's recent Artsmark (Gold) award, enrich learning opportunities. Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted well through a wide range of projects, activities, special events and, memorable moments such as the appearance of a real-live donkey at the school's Easter celebrations.

Rigorous procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment meet statutory requirements, including meticulous checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of pupils.

Parents and carers are right to be positive about the school. They appreciate the effort to ensure that they are actively involved in support for their children.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



22 May 2012

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Martin's C E Primary School, Brighton, BN2 3LJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting and talking with you and was pleased to hear that you are happy and feel very safe at school. I was particularly impressed with your enthusiasm for learning, your exceptional politeness, high quality displays around the school and your delightful singing in assembly. You certainly enjoy the range of extra activities including the clubs, music and drama performances and sport.

You go to a good school. Most of you make good progress because you are well taught, teachers make learning fun and you are keen to learn. Your attainment at the end of Year 6 is about the same as other boys and girls of this age. Teachers keep you safe and I was impressed to discover how rare bullying is and how confident you are that any is quickly dealt with. You and your parents and carers told the inspection team that you like school and that it is a happy place where you feel very safe. You behave well and impressed me with your good manners.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to help you succeed. I have asked them to do the following.

- Ensure that more of you make faster progress in writing and mathematics by making work not too easy or too hard and providing just the right level of challenge, particularly for those of you who can learn quickly.
- Make more opportunities to practise your problem-solving and creative writing skills.
- Ensure that marking in books helps you understand how to improve further.
- Ensure that information about the youngest children when they arrive at the school is used to plan activities that will help them make faster progress when they start school.

You can help your school continue to improve by maintaining your good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning and continuing to work very hard.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Forbes
Lead inspector

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