

Martlesham Beacon Hill Primary School

Black Tiles Lane, Martlesham, Woodbridge, IP12 4SS

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement in order to maintain pupils' good achievement. Currently, pupils are not given enough work that interests and challenges them.
- Pupils make unnecessary errors because teachers do not check on them closely enough as they work. Marking does not always show pupils how to improve.
- Planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not good enough to develop children's learning through play, particularly in the outdoor area.
- High staff turnover has hampered efforts to improve teaching and strengthen leadership.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons requires improvement to make sure that they make a prompt start and work hard throughout their lessons.
- Communication within the school requires improvement to heal divisions and restore morale among staff.
- Communication with parents requires improvement to make sure they are well informed and to increase their trust in the school.
- The school is not as good as its self-evaluation suggests and the governing body does not challenge the school leadership strongly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Teachers have some good techniques to help pupils improve their writing and visualise mathematical ideas.
- The headteacher is determined to improve teaching and raise standards. She is good at recognising the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons she observes.
- The school has access to good support and training through its partnerships with other schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons, involving seven teachers, including the headteacher. Two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons and small-group sessions to observe the support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and for pupils who need help to catch up. They also observed children reading to a teaching assistant.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher, including in her capacity as the special educational needs coordinator; subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants; a group of pupils; members of the governing body; a group of parents and carers invited by the inspection team; a visiting volunteer helper; and two representative of the local authority. Telephone calls were made to a Local Leader of Education who is supporting the school and to three parents who had contacted Ofsted directly.
- Inspectors took account of 70 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters from parents received during the inspection and seven other communications made to Ofsted before and during the inspection. They spoke informally with several other parents and carers. They also considered 16 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents including the school's improvement plan, data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring files, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in mathematics, literacy and science. They also reviewed children's records from the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection team

Stephen Abbott, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is slightly below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school receives additional funding known as the pupil premium, for 19 pupils. This figure is below average for the size of school. Pupil-premium funding is provided to improve the progress of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who belong to military service families and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has pre-school and after-school provision on site which is managed by an external provider and inspected separately.
- The school has seen several changes in teaching staff since the last inspection in February 2012. A senior teacher left in July 2012 and a new assistant headteacher joined in September 2012. The assistant headteacher returned to her previous school after two terms and another teacher resigned at Easter 2013, so two classes have temporary teachers for this term. Another teacher is due to leave at the end of term and three new appointments have been made for September 2013, including a new assistant headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and maintain pupils' good achievement by ensuring that, on a consistent basis:
 - lessons capture pupils' interest and provide work that challenges each pupil at the right level
 - teachers periodically check around the class for errors, misconceptions or signs that pupils have misunderstood what to do
 - mathematics lessons include a variety of questions on each topic to deepen pupils' understanding
 - children in the Reception class are offered purposeful activities that promote learning through play, especially in the outdoor area
 - in their marking, teachers identify errors and how pupils can improve, set additional tasks to correct or improve the work and check that these tasks have been completed successfully.
- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons and their commitment to work hard by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan enough work for the time allocated
 - check that pupils start their work promptly and maintain their concentration
 - put a rapid stop to any off-task behaviour or unnecessary noise.
- Improve communication with parents and carers by:

- identifying their concerns and consulting them on proposed changes to make sure that their concerns are addressed
 - making it clear that their positive comments and complaints are welcomed
 - ensuring that school publications are attractive and written in a friendly tone
 - explaining to them why it is not always possible to provide full details about teacher absences or resignations for reasons of confidentiality.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
- ensuring that critical feedback to teachers and other staff is balanced by praise for strengths or improvements in performance so that staff morale is consistently high
 - including more detail in the school improvement plan about how each improvement will be achieved and who leads on each aspect
 - ensuring that governors have the confidence, skills and knowledge to hold the school leadership rigorously to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of Leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average in all year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils make a good start to reading because they learn about the sounds letters make in Reception and Year 1. The majority of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage have reached the new, more demanding levels introduced by the government this year. Over the last six years, attainment has usually been above average in the national end-of-key stage assessments.
- The school's internal assessments show that pupils in Years 1 to 6 have made good progress in reading and mathematics since starting their present key stage. Progress is also good in writing for most year groups, with no underachievement. Although good progress was demonstrated in only a few of the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' progress over time remains good. The school deserves credit for improving pupils' achievement during a period of high staff turnover. The headteacher has made a direct contribution by teaching the older pupils herself at times.
- In most cases, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good progress in reading and mathematics. This is because they are well supported in most lessons and in small withdrawal groups by an effective team of learning support assistants. The school is now working to improve writing skills, where progress has been slower for a few pupils
- Pupils learn well across a range of subjects, applying their reading, writing and mathematical skills. For example, pupils create well-written descriptions of science experiments, drawing diagrams and collecting data. The more-able pupils also draw conclusions and provide explanations of their findings.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to support all disadvantaged pupils, not just those for whom it is intended. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified in the regular pupil progress meetings and targeted by their teachers for extra attention. In the 2012 national tests, the gap between pupils in the pupil premium group and other pupils was close to the national average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has fluctuated due to the recent staff changes. Pupils' good progress over time suggests that they have all experienced effective teaching at some stage, but teaching currently requires improvement.
- The school's own lesson observations over recent times show a mixed picture, with the majority of lessons being well taught but a significant minority requiring improvement. During the inspection, most of the teaching seen required improvement, though teaching was consistently good in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching requires improvement for a variety of reasons. For example:
 - pupils sometimes spend too long listening to whole-class introductions that are pitched too high for some pupils and too low for others
 - once pupils are given independent work suited to their different needs, some groups are slow to start working because the teacher does not check on them soon enough

- some lesson activities are not well chosen to match the intended learning
 - pupils in some classes are set too many easy questions in mathematics so they do not spend enough time on the sorts of problems that most often cause difficulty
 - pupils are not always given enough purposeful work to do, and can complete the set tasks without needing to try their hardest
 - more-able pupils are too often given tasks that invite them to create questions of their own, rather than being given challenging questions to answer
 - teachers do not always address misconceptions and errors as they arise around the classroom, because they focus too much on working with one group.
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- The best teaching includes good questioning to explore pupils' knowledge and understanding, the use of 'talk partners' to help pupils think of ideas to share with the whole class, activities that capture pupils' interest and imagination, and good use of visual aids and reminders such as the 'learning wall' displays for literacy and numeracy. Most of the lessons that require improvement also have some good features.
- Some teachers make good use of memorable phrases in place of technical terms to help pupils improve their writing. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils were reminded to include 'burger sentences', such as this one, which include additional information between commas. Visual aids such as the hundred square, number line and coloured cubes are used well to promote understanding in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They are usually well briefed by their class teachers and have a good knowledge of the pupils they are asked to support.
- The quality of marking is variable. Some work is not marked in enough detail. In other cases, teachers write comments on the work but do not request that it is improved. In the best cases teachers mark well, taking time to write detailed comments of pupils' work, including an additional task, for example to correct an error, or improve the work. However, they do not always check that pupils have responded.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children enjoy the opportunities for free play, but some of the activities, particularly in the outside area, are not always structured well enough to promote good learning, particularly when teaching assistants do not receive enough guidance about how to promote learning through play.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not always positive. In lessons where the teacher does not insist on a sharp start to independent work, some pupils waste time. Occasionally, this leads to low-level disruption in lessons, because pupils do not always have enough to do. Behaviour management requires improvement in some lessons to ensure that pupils maintain their concentration. Some teachers tolerate off-task behaviour and unnecessary noise.
- Pupils are polite and behave well around the school. They generally get on with each other well, and comply with instructions or behaviour reminders. Most feel safe at school, but some pupils, parents and carers have raised concerns about the unsettling effect of the recent staff changes.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying. Most are happy at school most of the time, but

describe occasional instances of bullying. Pupils say they know who they can speak to in these circumstances. However, nearly a quarter of parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire think that the school does not deal with bullying well enough.

- Attendance has improved and is now above average due to the school taking a stronger line on term-time holidays, in accordance with government expectations. Punctuality has also improved for some pupils, following intervention by the school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe because they learn about different sorts of risk, including those associated with the internet and social media.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has set out a clear vision for the school, based on high expectations for staff and pupils. She has taken a hard line on raising standards in teaching which has demotivated some staff, who feel they have not had enough support to make the necessary changes. This has contributed in part to the higher-than-usual staff turnover. However, the majority of the school's staff and the governing body feel that the school is well led. Standards are rising and pupils are making better progress.
- The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities but some of its action points lack detail. They say what improvement is expected, but not always how it will be achieved. The plan indicates who will be involved in making the changes, but not who leads on each issue.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored effectively. Lesson observations are regular and provide detailed, subject-focused feedback, with clear suggestions for improvement. Strengths are also identified, but some staff say that they find the lack of praise disheartening.
- Subject leaders are beginning to take on a greater role though some are at an early stage of using pupil progress data to inform their work. Positive changes since the last inspection include improvements to the planning of science lessons and the establishment of 'working walls' for literacy and numeracy in every classroom. The teaching of phonics and the quality of feedback to pupils on their writing are now more consistent.
- Most of the issues identified by the last inspection are being addressed and the impact of changes is evident in the improved achievement. However, the high staff turnover has hindered the drive to strengthen teaching, and has had a number of other negative effects:
 - the school has been without an assistant headteacher since January, putting more demands on the headteacher and the less experienced subject leaders
 - staff absences have meant that the school has had to use supply teachers and, following two resignations, to make temporary appointments
 - the staffing difficulties have made it more difficult to release staff to take part in professional development opportunities such as visits to effective schools and the local 'lesson study' project
 - some parents and carers feel that they have not been kept well-enough informed about the reasons for staff changes, and have lost confidence in the school leadership.
- Many parents and carers currently have reservations about the school. While a majority would still recommend the school to other parents, many would not. Some parents have moved their children elsewhere and others are considering the possibility. A frequently expressed view was

that parents would wait to see if the situation improved next term.

- Communication with parents needs to improve. The headteacher and governing body already provide weekly newsletters and have consulted with parents on other changes, such as making pupil reports easier to understand. However, further improvements are needed. The language used in newsletters is often too formal and until very recently, the school website did not make it clear how to make a complaint. In addition, the website does not include the required outline of the school's curriculum.
 - The curriculum, which is the overall plan of what will be taught, requires improvement. This is recognised by the school, which has plans to incorporate more creativity, to implement the new national curriculum and to improve the outdoor learning environment for the Reception class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted adequately through lessons and other activities, including assemblies, the school council and after-school clubs. Pupils sing enthusiastically during assemblies.
 - The school is receiving support from the local authority in line with its policy to make every school a good school. The school is building a partnership with a successful Suffolk school, whose headteacher is a Local Leader of Education. This partnership is a good source of advice and support for the headteacher and subject leaders. In addition, the local cluster of schools provides many good opportunities for professional development.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body receives regular reports from the headteacher and some governors visit the school to observe its work directly. The governing body is supportive but does not provide enough challenge for senior leaders. For example, the governors have gone along with a generous self-evaluation of good teaching and good leadership and management, despite their awareness of parental concerns and the improvements required in teaching.
 - The governing body meets its statutory requirements, for example in relation to safeguarding and equal opportunities monitoring. They keep themselves up-to-date with training; monitor the school's finances, including the use of the pupil premium; and make suitable arrangements for the headteacher's appraisal and well being.
 - The school has a suitable complaints policy but, until very recently, the governing body has not explained the procedure to parents in plain English. As a result, some parental complaints have been sent to other bodies, such as Ofsted or the local authority, rather than directly to the school.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124596
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	422221

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue White
Headteacher	Pauline Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2012
Telephone number	01473 624409
Fax number	01473 624409
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