

St Martin's Catholic Primary School

St Martin's Lane, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 6HZ

Inspection dates

29–30 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St Martin's is highly valued by pupils, staff and the whole community. There is a very positive and caring climate for learning.
- Children make excellent progress in the outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has been high for many years. Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils are provided with lots of creative and enjoyable opportunities to learn.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are of a very high quality and contribute well to pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils feel very safe.
- Support for vulnerable pupils and their families is outstanding.
- Successful actions have been taken to improve pupils' reading skills and attendance.
- Relationships with parents are excellent.
- Very strong partnerships exist with other local schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Teachers do not always meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially the more able. Marking does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve.
- Not enough pupils consistently make better than expected progress, especially in mathematics.
- The impact of plans drawn up by the school to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils is not always easily measured. Too much emphasis has been placed on pupils making expected progress. Better systems to track pupils' progress are at an early stage of development but are leading to improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons and scrutinised pupils' work in books and on display around school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, along with other school leaders. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and others in lessons and at break times. Inspectors also listened to some pupils reading.
- A number of the school's documents were examined, including school development plans, the school's evaluation of its own performance and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed records on pupils' progress and the support given to pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, those in receipt of the pupil premium and the impact of additional funding for sport.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the views expressed by parents via school questionnaires. Additionally, they considered 27 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Don Parker

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school. There are no Nursery classes.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children from service families) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher supports another local school as a Local Leader in Education.
- There is a before-school club which is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding and so increase the proportions of pupils making at least good progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring all pupils, particularly the more able, are given work which is not too easy or too hard
 - ensuring teachers' marking always provides pupils with clear information on how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - ensuring actions planned by the school to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are always clear and measurable
 - holding senior leaders and teachers more rigorously to account for pupils making more than expected progress
 - embedding the new electronic pupil progress tracking system so that any pupils in danger of underachieving are identified quickly and effective actions taken to support their particular needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and abilities below those typically expected for their age, particularly in their speaking and listening and personal development. They make excellent progress in all areas of learning and leave the Reception Year close to the national average and well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and their results in 2013 show that they consistently attain significantly above average standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 2.
- Pupils continue to progress well through Key Stage 2. The results of national tests show that over time, by the end of Year 6, pupils consistently reach standards in English and mathematics that are significantly above the national average. Although results dipped in 2013, particularly in mathematics, attainment is still well above average. As a result, pupils are well prepared for secondary school.
- However, although pupils generally attain high standards, their progress across years varies and not enough of them are making more than expected progress, particularly in mathematics. Overall, the more-able pupils make good progress in English but not enough attention is given to their progress in mathematics.
- Pupils are systematically taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make), especially in the Reception Year and in Key Stage 1. In 2013, Year 1 pupils performed in line with the national average in the phonics screening check. This was a significant increase on 2012, reflecting the success of the school's actions to improve the teaching of phonics. Pupils have an obvious love of reading because they are encouraged to read widely and are taught very effectively throughout school. Able readers in both key stages confidently discuss their favourite books and authors.
- Pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation are usually accurate and their handwriting is neat and well presented. Teachers provide a wide range of creative opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes. Writing standards are high.
- In mathematics, pupils display well-developed mental calculation skills that help them with problem solving. Teachers insist pupils apply their learning effectively across subjects; however, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to get to the next level, particularly more-able pupils.
- The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and progress well.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, also make good progress. In 2012, their attainment was nearly a term ahead of similar pupils nationally in English but half a term behind those not eligible in school. In mathematics, they were in line with similar pupils nationally but two terms behind those not eligible in school. The school took successful action to address this and in-school gaps have closed rapidly in English and mathematics; in some year groups, pupils eligible for free school meals are ahead of other pupils.
- The small proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive high-quality, well-targeted additional help and support to ensure they make good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good and occasionally outstanding. The very warm, friendly and positive learning environment helps to foster the outstanding relationships all teachers and support staff have with pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Skilled staff with high

expectations have created a stimulating and vibrant learning environment with high-quality resources and well-established routines. They provide an excellent range of opportunities for children to benefit from adult-led activities or those they choose for themselves.

- In the very best teaching in school, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and what they know about how well pupils are learning to plan work that stretches pupils of different ability levels. Teachers use good questioning skills to prompt and challenge pupils so that they make the best possible progress. Excellent use is made of the highly skilled teaching assistants to support pupils' learning and to boost their self-esteem.
- This highly successful teaching is carried out at a brisk pace and inspires pupils to do their very best. Pupils are actively engaged in working with others to deepen their understanding.
- However, in the less successful teaching, teachers do not always match the activities closely enough to pupils of different abilities, particularly the more able, and this slows the progress these pupils make, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have a pride in their work and this is reflected in the high standards of presentation seen in books. However, although teachers mark pupils' work regularly, they do not always provide sufficient guidance on how pupils should improve their work further.
- Information and communication technology is used successfully in lessons to extend the range of opportunities for pupils to learn and to record their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in the vast majority of lessons and outside are exemplary. They benefit from outstanding relationships with staff that boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are highly respectful, courteous and extremely well mannered.
- They have a real pride in their school. A typical pupil comment is: 'I don't just like this school, I love it.' Pupils were particularly keen to tell inspectors just how much they enjoy learning and that staff really care about them and help them with their work.
- All pupils feel safe and secure in the school and they know a great deal about the different forms that bullying may take, including cyber bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. They say that on the very few occasions bullying happens, they are confident it is sorted out quickly. Pupils know about 'stranger danger' and how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. They respect and value one another's differences, appreciate that everyone is special and unique and know that discrimination of any kind is wrong.
- School councillors, playground leaders and many other pupils eagerly grasp the opportunities offered to take on responsibility.
- Pupils enjoy attending the excellent range of clubs and activities that the school provides, particularly those involving residential visits, different sports and inter-school competitions.
- Pupils say that behaviour in school is excellent. Parents' responses in the Parent View questionnaire and in surveys undertaken by school are overwhelmingly positive about behaviour in school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have been successful in ensuring that all staff share a vision of maintaining a happy, caring school where children are at the centre of all they do and where everyone feels valued and part of a whole-school team.
- This excellent team spirit and high levels of morale are clearly reflected in the positive response to the voluntary staff questionnaires. They are also evident in the pride of the pupils in attending the school and the overwhelming support from parents.
- Regular checks are made on the effectiveness of teaching and extensive training is provided for all staff. Teaching is improving where needed, although a few aspects to improve remain.

- Although the progress of pupils is monitored regularly, not enough has been done to identify and support those pupils, particularly the more able, who are not achieving as well as they should. Too much importance has been placed on pupils making expected rather than more than expected progress. Staff have not always been accountable for the amount of good progress made by pupils in their class. Senior leaders have tackled this by introducing an electronic tracking system but this is still in its infancy and not yet fully implemented.
- The school's plans for improvement identify accurate priorities. Actions taken by the school to sustain pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning have been highly successful, as has its work on improving the teaching of reading. The school has also worked very effectively on the attendance of pupils, which is broadly average and improving. However, actions planned by senior and other school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils are not always sharply focused on clear and measurable outcomes for pupils.
- Successful changes have been made to the curriculum to make it more creative in linking subjects together. It is enriched with drama and music. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The school manages the provision of a family support worker it shares with other schools. This has enabled the school to provide outstanding support to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents, the local community and schools locally.
- The local authority has provided effective support and helped the headteacher and other staff in assisting colleagues in other schools.
- Funds to extend the range of sporting activities available are used effectively to improve the quality of sport on offer and increase pupils' participation in different sport activities and competitions. A detailed action plan is in place to support this.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are enthusiastic and well trained. They receive useful information from the school to help their understanding of the strengths and areas for further development. Governors meet regularly to oversee all areas of the school's work. They have used school finances very effectively, including additional funding for school sport and pupil premium funding for the benefit of eligible pupils. They review data on pupils' progress and have a good understanding of how the attainment of pupils compares with that in other schools locally and nationally. They are less involved in checking that all groups of pupils make enough progress.
 - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching. They have ensured that the performance of staff is regularly reviewed and that teachers' pay is linked to how well pupils are doing. However, governors are not involved fully in holding teachers sufficiently to account for the achievement of pupils. Governors ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed and that safeguarding meets requirements.

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	111380
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	422516

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Littlewood
Headteacher	Phil Hallman BA
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2009
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