

St Martin's Primary School

Holly Bush Walk, Hereford, HR2 6AF

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The headteacher's changes to the curriculum and promotion of more engaging teaching have taken too long to have a sustained impact on pupils' progress at Key Stage 2.
- Although most parents speak highly of the school, some would like a clearer explanation of pupils' progress and a quicker response to individual concerns.
- Leaders and teachers do not always coordinate additional teaching with mainstream lessons. As a result, it does not support pupils' learning as well as it should.
- Not all teachers insist on well-formed handwriting and pupils' careful checking of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- A minority of pupils feel that, although the school always acts when bullying is reported, incidents are not always resolved quickly enough.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils do not always develop knowledge and understanding at sufficient depth in subjects other than literacy and mathematics. Marking in these subjects sometimes fails to identify precisely what pupils need to do to improve their work.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures to prepare them fully for later life in modern Britain.
- Lessons begin in a lively way but, in some, the tempo slackens and children's concentration is allowed to drift. When teachers' questioning is superficial, it does not probe or deepen pupils' understanding.
- The challenging behaviour of a very small number of pupils is proving resistant to change.
- Playground equipment does not promote imaginative and collaborative play.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors have responded decisively to the review of governance, and are now providing effective oversight of the school.
- The involvement of a larger number of subject leaders in lesson planning and checking on pupils' learning is helping to drive up standards.
- Although many children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typical for their age, good teaching means that all make rapid progress and leave ready for Key Stage 1.
- The teaching of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs has improved, and their overall progress is now good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons, taught by 13 different teachers; one observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also saw pupils learning individually and in small groups outside their normal classes. They visited the library and an assembly, and observed children's conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils, including three selected at random, and spoke with many others informally. Inspectors listened to pupils reading in several lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of books and other work. They scrutinised data on pupils' targets and current levels of achievement, and checked some of these against the work they saw.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and their evaluations; a review of governance conducted in response to a previous monitoring visit; records of how leaders check on teaching; minutes of governing body meetings; case studies; policies; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- Inspectors took into account the 15 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, letters from parents, and the school's own records of parental and pupil surveys. They spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the school day. They also considered the 41 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Berrow

Additional Inspector

Jayne Clemence

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Martin's Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. There is part-time Nursery provision for pre-school children, with morning and afternoon sessions.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is slightly above average.
- An average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school each year other than at normal points of transfer is double the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that pupils receive sufficient guidance on how to improve their work in all subjects
 - extending the range of questioning by teachers and teaching assistants to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - insisting on well-formed joined handwriting and careful attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar in all written work
 - organising support teaching so that it does not interfere with pupils' learning in their normal lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that parents, including the few whose children engage in persistent poor behaviour, understand clearly the values and expectations of the school, and how they can support their children in meeting them
 - providing a broad curriculum at Key Stage 2 that deepens knowledge and understanding in the full range of subjects, alongside the development of key skills
 - enriching pupils' experience and understanding of different cultures and beliefs.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the school's high expectations for behaviour are rigorously sustained in all lessons
 - providing a wider range of play equipment for use at recreational times.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have not secured a consistently high rate of progress across the school, especially at Key Stage 2. The headteacher has emphasised the importance of engaging and imaginative teaching, and ensured the effective marking of work in English and mathematics. While these are evident in lessons, academic standards for older pupils are only now beginning to rise sharply.
- Although the school's improvement plans are detailed, set clear criteria for success, and are based on a realistic appraisal of the school's performance, the school's self-evaluation is too generous.
- Lessons in some subjects, particularly science, history, geography and religious education, do not focus sufficiently closely on deepening pupils' understanding. Learning succeeds in reinforcing literacy and numeracy, but somewhat at the expense of the knowledge and the skills associated with the individual subjects. This detracts from pupils' preparedness for secondary school.
- There are a number of opportunities to experience other cultures – for example, inspectors observed pupils in Reception tasting Chinese food as part of celebrating the Chinese New Year – but these are too slight and infrequent to prepare pupils fully for life in modern Britain. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is developed through the opportunity for pupils to discuss and shape their own learning, and through structured opportunities to debate important topics.
- Leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage foster excellent relationships with parents but these are not sustained as pupils move up the school. A few parents complained to inspectors about individual instances of poor communication, and a minority believe that information about pupils' progress is not helpfully presented.
- Primary sports funding is spent on training staff to be more effective in teaching aspects of physical education, and on after-school clubs. These are valued by pupils, and the school can point to a greatly increased take-up, but the school's evaluation does not identify which expenditure has the most impact.
- The headteacher has implemented a new approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels, identifying new benchmarks for attainment and organising the regular tracking of pupils' progress. Judgements are moderated with other schools, which means that the accuracy of assessments is checked. New procedures have taken a time to bed in, and the school has already adjusted some of the benchmarks it is using, but teachers now have confidence in the new approach being taken. However, the school has not ensured that parents understand these changes sufficiently clearly.
- Subject leaders look at books and observe lessons to check how well pupils are learning. They use their specialist knowledge to advise colleagues in their lesson planning. This is contributing to improvements in teaching, especially in English and mathematics. Leaders have ensured that teachers make sharper use of assessment information in their planning for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The school spends the funding it receives to support disadvantaged pupils on providing additional teaching for those at risk of falling behind, working closely with families to ensure disadvantaged pupils are fully engaged in their learning, and, to a lesser extent, on staff training and subsidising school trips. The impact is analysed rigorously against the progress pupils have made. This pattern of expenditure last academic year secured a rise in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding now meet all statutory requirements. Staff show tenacity and skill in securing the cooperation of other agencies to help children in difficulty. There is a strong commitment to tackling disadvantage and discrimination, and the school has proved successful in

improving significantly the well-being and education of some very vulnerable pupils.

- The headteacher sets precise targets for staff and judges teachers' performance effectively. The results are used to make decisions about pay rises and promotion. Staff, including teachers at an early stage of their careers, report that training is helping them to improve
- The local authority has a realistic view of the school, and has provided useful advice on managing human resources, working with families and on how best to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have responded energetically and thoughtfully to the review of governance conducted following a previous inspection and they are now providing effective oversight of the school. They are much more involved with the school, visit regularly, and report their findings to governing body meetings. They have made sure that they are well trained and well informed. Meeting records show that they ask challenging and detailed questions to the headteacher and other senior leaders about pupils' attainment, the quality of teaching in the school and the impact of the pupil premium. They have increased the school's profile in the local community.
 - Governors have worked with the headteacher to establish a robust performance management scheme that rewards good teaching and identifies where there is weaker performance.
 - Governors check that senior leaders comply with all safeguarding requirements. They check on school trips and monitor the safety of the site. They ensure that the school works within its budget.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In a minority of classes, particularly towards the end of the lesson, pupils' concentration wanes and they do not pay sufficient attention to discussion. Occasionally, pupils continue talking when they have been asked to stop. Pupils confirm that a few lessons are disrupted in this way, although, when it occurs, they say the teacher deals with it successfully.
- The school admits a proportion of pupils with challenging behaviour, some partway through their primary education. In response, the school has adopted a programme for working with families to improve these pupils' attitudes and academic progress. Although some make rapid progress, there remain a very small number of pupils whose behaviour has proved resistant to change. The number of fixed-term exclusions was relatively high two years ago, but fell last academic year.
- Pupils' behaviour outside the classroom is generally orderly and courteous, although there are instances in which younger pupils are a little excitable in the corridors. At break and lunchtime, pupils play amicably, although there is a shortage of engaging play equipment available, especially for pupils in Key Stage 1. Pupils respect their school buildings, and no litter was seen during the inspection.
- In the large majority of lessons during the inspection, pupils' attitudes towards their work were good. They collaborated effectively in pairs and groups, answered questions with enthusiasm, and took pride in their written work.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Pupils said that they report any instances of bullying to a teacher, and that it is resolved, but not always quickly enough. This is a view shared by a very small minority of parents. Very occasionally, pupils use racist language unaware of its implications, and the school treats these incidents with an appropriate degree of seriousness.
- The school teaches pupils well about aspects of safety such as internet safety and road safety through assemblies and designated lessons. The school assesses all school trips for risk, and pupils

fully understand these procedures.

- Attendance has risen over recent years but remains below the national average. The school is zealous in chasing up absentees, fully appreciating the need to check that pupils are safe.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils and their parents say that pupils are safe in school. When pupils join the school partway through their primary education, their induction is carefully planned, and they are made to feel welcome.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing or mathematics in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching in these key stages in all subjects is too variable.
- If pupils become restless towards the end of a lesson, some teachers do not respond firmly enough to inattention or talking across the class discussion, with the result that such behaviour tends to persist. Pupils' learning slows as a result.
- Pupils are always willing to respond in class, but questioning is not often extended to challenge pupils' initial ideas and explore alternatives. This means that pupils often do not deepen their understanding as fully as they might. In lessons other than English and mathematics, marking and verbal feedback sometimes fails to identify clearly what pupils' next steps should be. Teachers do not check that pupils fully heed the advice that is given.
- Progress in writing requires improvement in both key stages. Teachers do not routinely insist on well-formed joined handwriting, and do not place a consistent emphasis on accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, although pupils generally take a pride in their work, the handwriting of older pupils is often printed and is sometimes immature. Marking identifies lapses in spelling, punctuation and grammar, but teachers have not established a consistent routine of pupils checking for errors before submitting work and correcting them after it has been returned.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well, both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. Teachers adopt a consistent approach, and pupils learn to tackle unfamiliar words confident that they are able to sound them out. Reading activities for younger pupils show a good balance of pronunciation and comprehension. At Key Stage 2, teachers continue to provide reading activities which are suited to pupils' abilities and interests, but pupils are given few opportunities to follow their own interests and read more widely.
- New guidelines on performing calculations are contributing to the more effective teaching of key mathematical skills. The school's commitment to link mathematics to real-life situations – for example, by using estate agents' plans – successfully engages pupils in their mathematical learning, which they say is particularly enjoyable.
- The school has improved its provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by reducing their dependency on adults and ensuring that teaching in mainstream lessons takes better account of their abilities. For example, a Year 6 pupil with handwriting and spelling difficulties was able to use a tablet computer to write at length. Training for staff has also raised the quality of small-group teaching. However, when additional support takes pupils out of their normal classes, teachers do not always plan their learning carefully enough. As a result, pupils sometimes miss out on important work that has been undertaken by the rest of the class.
- Teaching assistants generally understand the aims of the lesson well, and provide effective support to individuals and groups of pupils. However, only in the Early Years Foundation Stage does their questioning frequently push pupils to deepen their understanding as far as they can.

- Work almost always builds well on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, and presents a challenge for all, including the most able. Teachers know their subjects well, and they insist that pupils from the youngest age onwards use the correct subject-specific terms. Marking in English and mathematics is frequent, thorough, and identifies what pupils need to do to improve. Homework generally makes an effective contribution to learning.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although an improvement on the previous year, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 remained below average in 2014. Pupils in Year 2 were a term behind pupils nationally, and pupils left Year 6 around six months behind pupils nationally. They did notably less well in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who made expected progress and the proportion who exceeded expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics were in line with national averages. Data presented by the school indicate that these proportions are on track to rise in 2015, and inspectors' observations would confirm that standards in Year 6, in particular, are rising. Pupils' work in English is characterised by a wide vocabulary and a well-developed sense of tone and purpose in the use of language; in mathematics, pupils are able to draw effectively on key skills to perform increasingly complex tasks with confidence.
- Disadvantaged pupils ended Year 6 approximately three terms behind pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and nearly four terms behind in reading. They left Year 6 with their writing and their mathematics about two and a half terms behind of that of their peers in the school, and three terms behind in reading. In reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who made expected progress increased in 2014, and data provided by the school indicate it is expected to improve further in 2015. These pupils are therefore beginning to catch up and close the attainment gap compared with other pupils.
- The school's adoption of a new system of assessment does not facilitate year-on-year comparisons, but inspectors' observations and scrutiny of books indicate that, while progress is now accelerating, pupils are making faster progress in some year groups and in some subjects than in others.
- There are very few most-able pupils in each year group. Generally, over recent years, they have made good progress, aided by setting arrangements in mathematics and extension work set in English.
- In 2014, pupils who joined the school in the latter years of Key Stage 2 achieved as well those who had been at the school longer.
- Over recent years, a majority of children have started in the Early Years Foundation Stage with fewer skills and abilities than is typical for their age, and they have started Year 1 with attainment which is below average. Good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children now join Key Stage 1 only a little below national expectations. The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check was in line with nationally expected results in 2013 and 2014.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and particularly those who started at the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, has increased, and is now good.

The early years provision

is good

- On entry to the Nursery, a majority of the children have skills and abilities below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. Good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables them to catch up rapidly, so that they join Key Stage 1 only a little below national expectations.

- Teachers prioritise the development of children’s communication and literacy skills, and this helps to accelerate progress in other areas, so that, by the end of the Reception Year, children achieve consistently well across all areas of learning. The proportion of the Reception class attaining a good level of development has increased each year, and is now approaching the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults show a secure and accurate understanding of children’s individual learning needs and provide activities that extend what children, including the more able, can already do. Adults observe learning carefully, and take every opportunity to stimulate further thought. Children readily understand the idea of making progress by taking the ‘next steps’ in their learning. The teaching of phonics in the Reception class builds steadily on children’s learning in Nursery.
- The early years setting provides a safe environment. Staff promote children’s moral and social education by establishing routines for them to take turns, share and listen to each other. As a result, children play and work together well. They respond promptly to adults’ requests. Teachers also introduce them to other cultures, so that they learn to respect others.
- Leaders have high expectations and ensure that staff work together as a team, with a shared understanding of each child’s abilities, and the skills to move them forwards. They have forged a strong relationship with parents, using some imaginative methods, such as asking children to write their parents letters of invitation to school events. Leaders’ assessment of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage was recently checked by the local authority and found to be accurate. Inspectors observed at first hand that children matched the judgments made about them.

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	116685
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	453655

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Hardwicke
Headteacher	Vickie Walker
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2013
Telephone number	01432 273633
Fax number	01432 277162
Email address	admin@st-martins.hereford.sch.uk

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