

The Martin Wilson School

New Park Road, Castlefields, Shrewsbury SY1 2SP

Inspection dates 30 June–1 July 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a happy and inclusive school. It is an oasis of calm and care for pupils and they thrive here.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully improved the school since the last inspection. They have raised pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Consequently, both are now good.
- Pupils achieve well from their starting points. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils are making better than expected progress this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well.
- Teachers provide interesting and motivating lessons and pupils learn well as a result.
- Children in the early years get a good start to school and enjoy learning. Outdoor provision in the school's woodland area is particularly strong.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons, in the playground and throughout the school is good. Pupils arrive in school eager to learn and have positive attitudes to school.
- Pupils feel safe in school because their welfare is given high priority. Pastoral support for pupils is at the heart of the school's work.
- The school's support for vulnerable pupils and their families is a strength of the school.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a keen understanding of the world they live in.
- Governors have improved their effectiveness in holding leaders to account for the school's performance. They provide a good level of challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is rising but it is still below average.
- The most able pupils are sometimes given tasks that lack challenge; this does not allow them to develop their skills and deepen their understanding further.
- Sometimes, pupils are insufficiently self-critical and do not check their own work for errors. Some are unclear how they can improve their work.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop their reasoning skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen those strategies that the school currently uses to improve the attendance of all pupils so that attendance at least reaches national levels.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to secure consistently rapid rates of progress for all pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to give explanations and deepen their reasoning skills, particularly in mathematics
 - consistently set high expectations for learning, particularly for the most able
 - encourage pupils to be more self-critical and carefully check their own work
 - consistently apply the school's marking system so that pupils are clear how they can improve their work
 - share the strong teaching practice more widely within the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have effectively and determinedly tackled the issues identified at the last inspection. As a result, the school has made the improvements needed to be good. Leaders and governors now have much higher expectations of staff and pupils. Teachers are now held to account for the progress of their pupils.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the school based on an accurate view of its strength and weaknesses. They have been successful in improving the school without losing sight of their core values of care, respect and inclusion for all. The school motto 'In our school everybody is important' is fully lived out by staff and pupils.
- Leaders have been outward-looking to learn from good and effective practice in other schools and from other leaders. This has been successful in bringing new initiatives into the school that have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders have introduced 'non-negotiables' for standards of presentation and classroom environments. These are regularly checked to ensure that standards and consistency are maintained. A new robust monitoring system to link school information with lesson observations and checks on pupils' work has improved the way that leaders check the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. There are sometimes missed opportunities for subject leaders to share examples of strong teaching practice they have observed with other staff across the school.
- Leadership is now more widely distributed than at the last inspection. Well-targeted training, which is now more personalised to individual needs, is appreciated by staff. An example of this is the way in which professional development has helped those leading physical education and sport to significantly improve the profile of this subject within the curriculum. This has led to the school recently being awarded the Silver School Games Mark to acknowledge its increased involvement in sport in the local community.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used effectively to reinforce the skills of teachers and, therefore, improve the outcomes for pupils. Funding includes the provision of specialist sports coaches, for example for dance tuition, and a wider range of clubs. Pupils talked animatedly about their participation in the Sundorne Dance festival and the recent cross-country, tri-golf and tag rugby tournaments.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to ensure that pupils supported by this additional government funding make progress that is at least in line with pupils nationally and within the school. In the Year 6 assessments in 2015 disadvantaged pupils outperformed their peers nationally.
- The school is inclusive and responds quickly and effectively to pupils' special educational needs or disabilities. Additional support is targeted carefully to help pupils be fully included and help them catch up. A number of pupils have significant additional needs. The school is driven in its determination to find exactly the right support for vulnerable pupils and their families. They work with an extensive range of external agencies. Support for vulnerable families is at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum has been carefully thought out to ensure that it is relevant to pupils in the school. It is motivating and provides pupils with a wide range of real-life experiences on which to draw. The range of topics pupils study is comprehensive, well balanced and takes account of the fact that pupils are learning in classes with mixed-age groups. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is well enhanced by trips, visitors to the school, assemblies and extra-curricular clubs. Pupils talked about the variety of clubs on offer ranging from Welsh club and cooking to Bushcraft and newspaper clubs. Art is a particular strength within the curriculum. Vibrant displays around the school, such as 3D sculptures in the style of Alberto Giacometti by Year 3, and Year 4's observational drawings of Egyptian artefacts, celebrate pupils' outstanding creativity.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of respecting cultural differences, and, as a result, diversity is clearly valued. There is a clear sense of belonging to the school community and also to the local community. Pupils talked about how they had worked together to prepare their Minion float for the recent Shrewsbury Carnival so they 'could help young and old people be cheered up'. The school's own rules of respect and tolerance ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoying the 'Queen's Birthday Tea Party' during the inspection were able to talk knowledgeably about a range of British traditions.

- Parents are supportive of the school, its leadership and staff. The vast majority would recommend the school to another parent. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment 'The school has a real place in the community and every child is made to feel important. Staff are very approachable and children are enabled to do their best.'
- The school works effectively with other schools in the area. Staff benefit from activities such as jointly looking at books to check pupils' progress and moderating work.
- The local authority has worked productively with the school since the last inspection and supports it effectively. Senior leaders have welcomed the support given. The local authority supports the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are committed to the success of the school. Their effectiveness has improved since the last inspection. All staff and governors are now invited to attend the 'standards' committee meeting where the tracking of pupils' progress is discussed. Governors ask challenging questions to ensure that pupils are making good progress and check what is being done for any pupil at risk of falling behind.
 - Governors say that they and school leaders now have higher expectations of what can be achieved. They say that the 'excuse culture' has now vanished. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They bring a good level of expertise to their roles.
 - Governors keep a close watch on finances and ensure that money, including the pupil premium and sport funding, is allocated and monitored appropriately.
 - Governors ensure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance and level of responsibility.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are proactive in their work with other agencies and parents to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. The headteacher is extremely knowledgeable about individual cases. Safeguarding processes are reviewed regularly by the governors to ensure that pupils are safe. Close links with the local housing association are in place so that the school has an accurate view of the needs of families. Well-kept records show that concerns are diligently recorded and that leaders act quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good and much improved since the last inspection when it was found to require improvement. Senior leaders have taken effective action to address any weak teaching. The work in pupils' books and the school's own information show that teaching is now good over time.
- Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils should achieve in their work. Teachers plan work which interests and engages pupils so that they learn well. Even so, leaders have correctly identified that sometimes work planned for the most able pupils lacks challenge.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are especially strong. This gives pupils the confidence to have a go at new work without fear of failure. A calm, purposeful atmosphere for learning has been created in most classes.
- Teachers often provide pupils with helpful information to extend their learning. Working walls provide good prompts and examples for pupils so that they can be more independent in their work. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons more now because teachers provide more practical activities. In Year 6 in mathematics, for example, learning was linked to the budget for the Queen's Tea Party to be held in school. This real-life problem-solving task provided a good context for pupils' learning.
- Pupils say that the introduction of marking ladders has helped them understand what they need to do to be successful in their work during each session. Pupils are self-critical as they plot their success on the marking ladder at the end of each session. They are less self-critical when proofreading their work to identify common spelling and punctuation errors.
- Good questioning is used effectively by staff to check pupils' understanding. Teachers are becoming familiar with the school's new marking and assessment policy. They assess and regularly check pupils' outcomes in all subjects. As a result of teachers' feedback, pupils are clear what they have done well. However, guidance about how pupils can improve their work is more limited and, as a result, pupils are sometimes unclear.
- Teaching assistants provide very effective support for learning, for example through asking pupils questions to clarify their understanding. They are well briefed and trained and work well in partnership with teachers.

- The teaching of basic skills is good. Reading and phonics are taught well. In small, focused groups, teachers encourage a love of reading through the choice of texts and themes linked to their interest, and by getting pupils to predict what will happen next to engender excitement and anticipation. Pupils develop de-coding skills which they apply to their reading to tackle unfamiliar words. They read fluently, accurately and with expression. The teaching of writing has improved. There is a more systematic approach to building up the process across a wide range of writing styles. Year 6 pupils' Viking newspaper reports and Year 1 pupils' recount of the Great Fire of London typify the progress that has been made in writing. Pupils learn well in mathematics because activities are planned effectively. At times, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to explain clearly the mathematical skills they have used or develop their reasoning skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment where their welfare and safety are paramount. They enjoy their time in school and most have good attitudes to learning. They are friendly, well-mannered and respectful to visitors, staff and other pupils.
- Pupils are extremely proud to be at the Martin Wilson School. They enjoy the opportunity to have responsibility and develop leadership skills. Year 5 junior leaders show maturity as they run sports sessions for younger pupils at lunchtime. They show good responsibility in helping pupils make friends and play well together. They help younger pupils in understanding more about how to be healthy.
- Pupils know how to keep safe. They have a well-developed understanding of how to protect themselves and others, especially when online. In discussion, they were able to give good examples of how the curriculum has ensured they are taught about ways to keep safe, appropriate to their age. All parents say that their children feel safe and are well looked after.
- The school cares very well for all its pupils. Pupils say how the use of the 'worry box' helps them. They know that a learning mentor will look at all the notes left and will talk to them about their concerns and worries. Pupils say there are also lots of other adults in the school that they can go to for support.
- Some pupils do not take full responsibility for their own learning and are content to let the teacher correct their mistakes. This hinders their ability to become self-critical as learners and sometimes, therefore, they repeat common spelling and punctuation mistakes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the case both in lessons and around the school and contributes to the orderly and harmonious community within the school.
- Pupils, staff, governors and parents agree that behaviour is good in school. School records confirm that behaviour has improved and is now typically good over time. Pupils say that occasionally there is 'a little bit of bullying'. They say this is quickly dealt with and school records confirm this.
- The small number of pupils who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour receive good support from staff and generally settle quickly as a result.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school's behaviour system. They understand the different levels of sanctions and think that the reward system is fair. Consistent implementation of this system by staff, and their high expectations for behaviour, help contribute to pupils' good behaviour.
- The school's subsidised breakfast club provides a good, healthy, nurturing start to the day for those who attend.
- Although attendance is improving and is moving closer to the national level, it remains below average and, as a result, requires further improvement. Since the last inspection, a range of strategies aimed at improving attendance have been put in place. These include strategies such as highlighting attendance in newsletters, to ensure that parents understand the impact that attendance has on the progress that pupils make. Pupils also particularly appreciate the '100% certificate' that they now receive for full attendance. Although such strategies are paying off, they are yet to be fully effective.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved across the school since the last inspection because of improved teaching and learning and more appropriate learning activities. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points. Standards of attainment have risen and a greater proportion of pupils are achieving age-related expectations.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been just below the national average for the last two years. School information and inspection evidence suggests that results this year will be similar. This demonstrates that effective phonics teaching is enabling good progress from often low starting points into school.
- There has been an improved trend over time in national assessments at Year 2 and Year 6 since 2013. In Year 2, in 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level was broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects at least good progress from pupils' previous low starting points. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was below the national average in reading and writing and in line in mathematics.
- Reading was the weaker subject in 2015 because not enough pupils achieved highly and made more than expected progress when compared with pupils nationally. The school has taken action this year to accelerate progress in reading, and current information shows that over half the pupils are making more than expected progress in their reading development at the end of Year 2.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in mathematics, reading and writing had risen and was broadly in line with national figures. Those attaining the higher levels were broadly in line with the national average in reading and writing but below in mathematics. The school's information and a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there is an increased proportion making more than expected progress this year across all subjects, including mathematics. Pupils are now much better prepared for the next stage of their education. Even so, sometimes, a lack of opportunity for pupils to give explanations and justifications hinders their ability to deepen their reasoning skills, particularly in mathematics.
- The progress of boys has improved and a greater number are making better than expected progress this year. This is a significant improvement compared to their performance over the two previous years. Current progress is good across all year groups.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities receive close support from adults to ensure they are secure in their learning. Pupils with particularly complex needs benefit from working in small support groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making much better progress. In the 2015 national assessments at the end of Year 2, the gap in attainment in writing had almost closed with gaps narrowing in the other subjects. In the Year 6 assessments, disadvantaged pupils were well above their peers nationally in reading and grammar. The majority of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making similar progress to other pupils. Closely targeted support has helped to narrow the gaps in learning.
- Pupils' books show that the most able pupils are usually making similar progress to their peers. At times, however, they are not challenged as well as they could be. They do not always move quickly on to deeper work once they have grasped a new concept, and when this occurs it slows their progress.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Nursery or Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are generally well below those typical for their ages, particularly in their communication and language skills and their self-care.
- Children get a good start to school. They make good progress throughout the early years. In 2015, there was a rise in the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development. Although still slightly below the national average, this shows good progress from low starting points. Current school performance information indicates that the results will be similar this year. Children are increasingly well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Disadvantaged children did not do as well as their peers in 2015. Current school information shows that the gap is beginning to narrow for these children.
- Good leadership has led to improved provision for children following close working with other local early years settings. Revisions to the curriculum in order to make learning more appealing to boys and to accelerate their progress are paying off. Through the introduction of activities such as a builders' yard,

the superheroes topic and the current topic about pirates, boys are now more engaged. Boys were observed developing their early writing skills by making treasure maps and developing their language skills during role play on a pirate boat.

- This year, the school has trialled a new digital assessment system to help with the tracking of children's progress. 'Learning journey' folders show that staff have become more confident with the new system as the year has progressed. Staff ably link next steps in learning to annotated photographs and observation notes. As a result, planned activities closely meet children's needs.
- Children's welfare and safety are given the highest priority. As a result, children are safe and confident. A very happy atmosphere has been created and so children have positive attitudes to learning. Relationships are strong. Parents are pleased with the start their children receive.
- Children are engaged well in their learning through the choice of activities they have inside and outdoors. Activities and tasks that children can choose for themselves enable them to practise skills developed already and try out new experiences.
- Children were observed developing their fine motor skills by snipping cabbage leaves, investigating bubble-wrap and making mermaid necklaces from pasta and string. Activities held in the school's woodland area are a strength of the provision. Here, children are able to safely take risks, such as cooking over the fire, climbing trees and using tools safely. Children are well aware of how to keep themselves safe. They eagerly recall the fire-pit rules and know they must come back to the centre when the horn is sounded. Early reading, writing and mathematical skills are threaded through the activities undertaken here.
- Children are enthusiastic about their work and keen to show it to visitors. They work well with each other in groups and pairs and behave well. Expectations are high and children respond well to them. Children are active and inquisitive learners who are happy to share and take their turn.
- Early numeracy and literacy skills, including phonics, are taught well. Reception children were observed using their 'forest school' diaries to record what had taken place earlier that day. Nursery children joined in enthusiastically with the story *Who Sank The Boat?* They showed good recall of the story and enjoyed re-enacting the story with animal masks.
- Links with parents have improved since the last inspection. Parents appreciate the accessibility of staff as it means that any minor concerns can be resolved quickly. Themed days, such as the recent Fabulous Fathers Pirate day, have enabled parents to work alongside their children. Parents say how much they appreciate these opportunities.

School details

Unique reference number	123447
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10002497

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Wright
Headteacher	David Purslow
Telephone number	01743 236 520
Website	www.martinwilsonschool.net
Email address	admin@martinwilson.shropshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is above average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above average.
- Children in the early years attend the Early Years Centre. Children of Reception age attend full-time. Children in the Nursery attend on either a part-time or full-time basis.
- There have been a significant number of teaching staff changes since the last inspection. There has been some turbulence in staffing over the last two years.
- The leadership team has been expanded and restructured since the last inspection.
- Apart from Year 6, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The school received a monitoring inspection in March 2014. The outcome of this visit, carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, was that leaders and governors were taking effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous full inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons across all year groups. Two of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, either in lessons or as a separate activity.
- Meetings took place with staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 10 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and five written comments. Parents were also spoken to at the start of the school day. The school's own last parental questionnaire was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors attended two school assemblies, carried out two learning walks and observed break and lunchtimes. They reviewed a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance, the school's information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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