

Inspection of a good school: St Martin's CofE Primary School

Hartington Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 3LJ

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff describe this school as feeling like a family. Pupils feel very safe. The school's clear mission statement, 'Learning to love, loving to learn,' is very well embedded, alongside the school values.

Pupils have worked with leaders to develop the school's eight 'Learning Creatures', which include 'Flash', the persevering tortoise, and 'Sid', the link-making spider. These characters help pupils to understand how to learn well. As a result, pupils across the school are ready to learn. They enjoy their lessons. Leaders, however, do not always have high enough academic expectations, particularly for the youngest children. Sometimes, lessons are not designed well enough to build on what pupils know and can do. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are sometimes not given the right support with their learning.

Behaviour throughout the school is calm and settled. Through the school's social skills curriculum, pupils learn to be confident, cooperative and polite communicators. Pupils are confident that if bullying does occur, staff will take effective action to stop it. Pupils, and their families, receive high levels of pastoral support. Mental health and well-being are top priorities. Most parents feel that the school nurtures not only their children, but their whole family.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have not designed the curriculum precisely enough. Consequently, pupils do not develop their understanding as well as they could as they move through the year groups. Prior to the pandemic, leaders started to redesign the curriculum. However, the work stalled due to turbulence in leadership. The recent appointment of an acting headteacher has stabilised the school.

In most subjects, including mathematics, leaders have not broken learning down into clear, well-sequenced steps. They rely on teachers to do this, but teachers' knowledge is sometimes weak. They ask pupils to carry out tasks without considering what knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful. Too often, pupils do not have the opportunity to practise and consolidate new learning. Teachers do not always anticipate potential misconceptions or assess pupils' understanding before moving on to new content. This is also the case in early years, where expectations of what children can achieve are too low.

Over time, the lowest attaining pupils have not had the right support to learn to read successfully. Addressing this has been leaders' priority. A new phonics curriculum was introduced this year. This has established clearer expectations for what pupils can achieve when well taught and supported. Too many older pupils are, however, still at an early stage of reading. Catch-up for these pupils is not yet urgent or effective enough.

Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is consistently well adapted or designed to be ambitious and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Frequently, teachers lower their expectations. Leaders have not been quick enough to identify and challenge this practice. More widely, there are not clear processes in place to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

Pupils' achievement across the year groups is not strong enough. There is then a strong focus on catching up and preparing pupils for the end of key stage assessments in Year 6. Leaders recognise that there is much work to do to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Personal development, including pastoral support, is a strength. This has been a particular focus following the pandemic restrictions. There is a clear personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum in place, and teachers have had specialist training. Pupils enjoy the range of trips that leaders provide, and which they ensure are accessible to all. Pupils enjoy being a part of the school choir, and look forward to regular singing assemblies. The school has a clear Christian ethos that underpins the personal development programme. Leaders want all pupils to understand the Christian faith and to learn how to take care of each other, their community and the wider world.

Leaders engage with staff very well. Staff say they would not want to work anywhere else. Senior leaders, and governors, are highly committed to the school and its pupils. They recognise that the school has gone through a period of significant instability, and that this has impacted on the quality of education pupils receive. There are clear and coherent plans in place to ensure a stable senior leadership, and to ensure that the quality of education is improved. The school is currently being supported by the local authority and by the diocese.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff are trained to identify pupils who need early help or who are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. There are clear systems in place for staff to raise their concerns. Leaders refer to and work with external safeguarding partners appropriately. Safer recruitment processes are well understood, and consistently followed. Leaders have ensured that staff are aware of how to raise any concern, including a low-level concern, about an adult. Leaders manage allegations about adults effectively and in consultation with the local authority. The school's PSHE curriculum helps pupils to recognise risk and stay safe, both in their day-to-day lives and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Over time, the lowest attaining readers have not had the right support to learn to read fluently and confidently at an age-appropriate level. Adult support is not always sufficiently precise. Leaders do not ensure that these pupils get sufficiently regular practice reading a well-matched decodable book. Leaders need to ensure that support for older struggling readers is precise, and delivered with urgency, so that these pupils can quickly catch up.
- Leaders have not designed a curriculum with sufficient ambition, including for early years. Furthermore, knowledge within the curriculum is not selected or organised clearly enough and pupils do not achieve highly. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is carefully thought through and sequenced clearly.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong as it could be. Additionally, they do not adapt the curriculum well for pupils with SEND. Leaders need to provide ongoing training to teachers to improve their subject knowledge and understanding of how to adapt the curriculum successfully for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders do not identify the needs of pupils with SEND or evaluate their provision well enough. This means that pupils with SEND are not supported effectively. Leaders need to ensure that they introduce clear procedures to identify and respond to pupils with SEND, and to evaluate the quality of support and interventions provided.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114539
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10242020
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Wilde
Headteacher	Jane Joshi (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.stmartins.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher was appointed in October 2022.
- The school is a Church of England school, within the Diocese of Chichester. The school's last section 48 inspection was in March 2018. The next section 48 inspection will be carried out within 8 years of the previous section 48 inspection.
- The school is not using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the acting headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- The inspector met the chair of governors. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. In the deep dives, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. For the reading deep dive, the inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 to 3 reading.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about curriculum development in other subjects, including PSHE, relationships and sex education and physical education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector considered how well the school manages safer recruitment, and how it manages allegations about adults.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans and recent minutes of the governing board. The inspector reviewed a range of external reports.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe.
- The inspector reviewed 32 responses to the staff survey, 42 responses to the pupil survey and 23 responses to the parent survey, including 21 free-text comments. The inspector spoke to parents at the gate on the morning of day 2 of the inspection.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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