



St Martin's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110038
Local Authority Reading
Inspection number 278354
Inspection date 18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Malcolm Johnstone

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pendennis Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Caversham Park Village
Age range of pupils	4-11		Reading RG4 6SS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189 015544
Number on roll (school)	126	Fax number	01189 475509
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Eleanor Gibson
		Headteacher	Mrs Anne Hogg
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Most pupils come from advantaged homes. Attainment on entry varies but is typically above average. A very small proportion of pupils have free school meals. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties and disabilities. A very small proportion of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at the early stages of learning English. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year and was previously the deputy. For a term prior to her appointment, she was acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils. As one parent wrote 'since leaving the school, my child has been in the top sets in secondary school. I firmly believe that this is due to the good education she received at St Martin's School'. The headteacher and senior managers set a clear direction and have high expectations of the pupils. After a period of staffing instability some eighteen months ago, there is now a more settled teaching team and teaching and learning is good. Incisive monitoring of teaching and the strong commitment to professional development has brought improvement and greater consistency to learning.

Good self-evaluation has helped to target support where it is most needed. As a result, overall standards are well above average and achievement for the large majority of pupils is good. The more able pupils do not do as well, particularly in mathematics because teachers do not always challenge them to do as well as they might. For these pupils, achievement is satisfactory. Good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress and do well in all aspects of their development.

There is a high degree of consistency in the teaching across year groups. This ensures that pupils make good progress in lessons. Teaching is enthusiastic and a good pace to learning keeps interest levels high. The interesting and broad curriculum motivates the pupils to want to learn and the good extra-curricular activities offer a further dimension to learning. Pupils do not, however, have enough opportunities to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication (ICT) skills to support learning in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The happy and workmanlike atmosphere and excellent relationships at all levels, leads to outstanding behaviour and attitudes to work. By the time they leave school, pupils are mature and sensible individuals because of their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are prepared extremely well for their future economic well-being. Pupils know how to look after their bodies by taking exercise and eating healthily. Care, guidance and support are good. There is highly effective pastoral support and good academic guidance. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their learning because they have individual learning targets to measure their progress. The large majority of parents who responded are pleased with all aspects of the school's work.

The strong team ethic, effective leadership, good teaching, maintenance of high standards since the previous inspection and effective self-evaluation means that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently challenge more able pupils in mathematics to raise their achievement.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to support and extend learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach the goals expected for their age. Results in the 2005 national tests at the end of Year 2 were broadly average but standards have improved significantly in 2006. In the 2005 tests, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in English, mathematics and science. In 2006, pupils did even better particularly in English and science. The more able pupils achieved well, although in mathematics significantly fewer reached the highest level and some did not achieve as well as they might. Whilst small numbers taking the tests can lead to fluctuations in overall standards, school targets were largely met and the school's own tracking data indicates a clear upward trend. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. This is because they receive effective additional support. Standards and pupils' achievements in ICT are good and have improved well since the previous inspection.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a result, pupils respect the opinions and beliefs of others and know that their views will be valued. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils are polite and courteous. As one pupil said 'we laugh with people not at them'. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. They say that they feel free from harassment, racism and bullying and speak highly of the support they receive. Pupils have high aspirations for their future and a strong work ethic. They have good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and work well as part of a group. This provides them extremely well for their future economic well-being. The school council has a positive voice in school improvement and has, for example, introduced a 'worry box' where pupils can express any concerns they may have. Pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy regular physical exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work ethic and relationships are excellent. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and respond appropriately. Teachers' enthusiasm and good use of resources makes learning fun and captures pupils' interest effectively. Planning is consistently good at all stages and assessment and tracking are used well to target support where it is needed most. This is helping ensure pupils make good progress in lessons and work builds successfully on what they already know. Despite recent improvements, the work given to the more able pupils in mathematics does not always provide consistent challenge. Teaching in

the Foundation Stage provides a good balance between teacher directed and independent work and helps children make good progress. Throughout the school, a particular strength in the teaching is the use and support of classroom assistants. They know what pupils are expected to learn and provide written feedback to the teacher at the end of sessions. Pupils' individual targets in literacy and numeracy help them see how well they are doing and marking gives good guidance on how they might improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum helps pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development. The well planned curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage helps them develop well in all areas of learning. There are good examples of links between subjects that provide opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to support learning. However, this is not consistently established. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including visits and visitors, give pupils good opportunities to work in teams and see how their community and the wider world works. This adds value to their economic well-being and enjoyment in learning. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and the few from minority ethnic groups who are at the early stages of learning English are met well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a strong commitment to making the school a safe and caring place where the needs of all pupils are paramount. Pupils say that they are listened to and helped if they have a problem. Good individual education plans and additional support for pupils with learning difficulties help them to make good progress in realistic and achievable steps. There are good systems for child protection and requirements regarding risk assessments are met. All teachers pay good attention to health and safety aspects. There is good provision to teach pupils about smoking and substance abuse and pupils fully understand the dangers. Academic guidance for more able pupils including the few who have been identified as gifted or talented is a developing aspect of the school's work and is not yet firmly established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, with strong support from all staff, pupils and governors, has successfully led the school through a period of staffing instability. They have arrested a dip in standards and restored a rising trend. The headteacher has high aspirations for the pupils and puts their needs first in all that she does. This is clearly reflected in the outstanding personal development of the pupils and the good care, guidance and support they receive. Over the past year or so, with support from the local authority, there has been significant improvement in the use of data analysis and tracking to

raise standards and achievement. This has not been as successful for the more able pupils in mathematics as it has in other subjects.

The new deputy head and key subject managers play a full part in school improvement and know where strengths and areas for development are. The subject leaders are developing their roles well and speak highly of their involvement in the national primary leadership programme. This has given them the skills and knowledge to really get to grips with incisive and focused monitoring of teaching and learning. Standards in their subjects are rising as a result. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and play a good part in planning a strategic direction for the school, for example, through their involvement in the good school improvement plan.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to let you know what I found out about your school. You are right when you say it is a good school and I know that you all enjoy coming. I would like to thank you for the friendly and helpful way you welcomed me. I enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and was very impressed with the way everyone gets on together. You were very keen to tell me that there is very little bullying in school and that the worry box has been very successful in helping when there are any problems. You know what to do if ever you are unhappy at school. It was good to see how much you know about keeping healthy and the importance of a good diet.

My discussion with the school council was really enjoyable and it is clear how seriously you take on the responsibility of representing your classmates. I think your behaviour was super in lessons and at playtimes. I was most impressed with how well you try in lessons to do your best. I know how much the headteacher and all the teachers and their helpers care about you and how hard they work to help you. I think that you are all a credit to your parents and the school.

There are a few things I have asked the headteacher to improve a little more. You do really well with your English and science and while you try hard in mathematics, I believe the work could be more challenging for some of you. You have good skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. I think that your teachers could help you use these skills more in other subjects.

I am sure that you will continue to help your teachers by working hard and I wish you every success in the future.

Mr M J Johnstone

Lead Inspector