



The Martin High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120255
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280780
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Janet Thompson HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Link Road
School category	Community		Leicester
Age range of pupils	11 to 14		Leicestershire LE7 7EB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2363291
Number on roll	576	Fax number	0116 2352121
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Nigel Blythe
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Martin Furniss

Age group 11 to 14	Inspection dates 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	Inspection number 280780
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out over two days by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Martin High School is near to the city of Leicester. The school provides education for pupils aged 11 to 14 with a wide range of abilities. It is popular in the area and oversubscribed. The number of pupils attending the school has increased from approximately 540 to 603 over the last five years. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, although only a small percentage takes free school meals. The majority of pupils come from suburban areas near the north west of the city and surrounding villages. Seven per cent of pupils come from areas within the city. Eleven per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and just over 2% do not have English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school enables pupils to make excellent progress in relation to their prior attainment. The school is at least good in all areas and has many outstanding qualities. The combination of consistently good provision and outstanding care and guidance helps pupils develop into strong, confident individuals.

The school evaluates its overall effectiveness as good but this is too modest because the consistently good provision has a very strong impact and results in pupils making outstanding progress. There are many significant strengths in pupils' achievements and personal development, as well as in the leadership, care, guidance and support. Most parents are very pleased with the education the school provides but a few are anxious that their pupils could receive more challenge. The school values individuals and carefully tracks each pupil's progress. Data is used very effectively to help teachers address potential underachievement but is not used to fully evaluate the impact of work on different groups of learners. The school does not do enough to ensure that the best ways in which some teachers help pupils to excel are shared consistently by all teachers.

Pupils have a high regard for the school. Their personal development is outstanding because the school's values are firmly embedded in an atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and pupils and between pupils.

Attendance is good and students enjoy their time at school. Good teaching and a curriculum that places a strong emphasis on preparing young people for the next stage in education make important contributions to the school's strong performance. The school has thoroughly addressed all but one of the areas identified for development at the last inspection. Information and communication technology (ICT) has improved less quickly than other areas. The school is well led and very effectively managed.

The school has done well to make such good progress through a time of difficulty in budget and staffing. The good leadership and dedication of all the staff demonstrate that the school has the capacity to further improve its performance. Value for money is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a consistent framework to ensure all teachers are as effective as the best in enabling pupils to understand how they can make more progress.
- Make better use of data to evaluate the impact of school systems on progress made by different groups of learners.
- Continue implementing the plans for improving resources and embedding ICT across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress, reaching standards that are well above average. Achievement is outstanding. High statutory targets are set for the national tests at age 14. Standards have been consistently high but in 2005 they reached levels that placed the school amongst the best nationally for progress made by pupils in mathematics, science and English. Similar progress is expected and achieved in the vast majority of other curriculum subjects. Consistent rapid progress is the norm for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils identified by the school for additional support respond so well that most of them quickly improve and no longer require it. Except for mathematics and science, boys' achievement is lower than that of girls but, overall, boys do better than their peers in other schools. The small number of pupils whose first language is not English also do well, making the same very good progress as their peers. There are very few pupils who leave primary schools with high standards who do not sustain their rapid development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

A comprehensive programme of multi-faith teaching effectively underpins spiritual development. Strong social development is supported by pupil participation in representative bodies such as school and year councils.

Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils respond to the high expectations of teachers. They develop mature habits of self-regulating behaviour and taking responsibility for their actions. This is a consequence of the school's determination that they should work collaboratively. Pupils have been actively involved in revising the code of conduct, rewards and sanctions.

A well organised induction programme, in association with partner schools, helps pupils to feel safe when they start school, and enables them to settle to work quickly. Bullying is rare because staff deal with incidents quickly. Pupils work together to identify unacceptable behaviour and prevent it by befriending and supporting each other.

Attendance is above national averages and has improved recently. There is good use of monitoring systems, and very well managed arrangements to inform parents of lapses. Pupils enjoy school life and praise the quality of relationships between peers and with teachers. They participate in a wide range of sporting and health related activities, supplemented by other clubs in music and drama.

Pupils understand and endeavour to pursue healthy lifestyles, taking advantage of well planned lessons on lifestyle and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. They learn to be active and responsible citizens in the community through a dynamic school council. They know how to manage money by planning projects and allocating budgets, as well as gaining wider awareness of the community through studying charities and deciding where to give support.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Positive relationships between pupils and staff have a significant impact on this. The most successful lessons are those where staff know pupils well, have good subject knowledge and where delivery is enthusiastic. Often, teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers are responsive to the needs of the class and adapt the pace and style of teaching accordingly. The school is beginning to help pupils to understand how they learn; they make most progress when they clearly understand their targets. Teachers noting pupils' daily progress and giving advice to pupils on how to do better are becoming firmly embedded in the culture of the school and having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The lack of a common framework for this hinders less experienced teachers from delivering to a consistently high standard, although there are very few lessons that are less than good. Teachers' use of questioning challenges the majority of pupils and worthwhile extension activities are planned for those who are more able. However, a small minority of pupils are not making the outstanding progress of which they are capable. The formal marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school, although each pupil receives valuable oral feedback.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is consistently good and nurtures the pupils' outstanding achievements. The school offers the full range of required National Curriculum subjects, although only one foreign language is taught. A variety of additional activities, including visitors and events out of school, enriches pupils' experience. Teachers incorporate many tried and tested methods from national initiatives into the content and delivery of their lessons. A comprehensive and successful range of additional approaches is used to support gifted pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The use of ICT across the curriculum is not yet fully developed. Specifically, it should have a greater impact upon teaching and learning in mathematics and science, be in more widespread use generally by teaching staff in lessons, and support learning inside and beyond the school.

Overall, it is the consistent high quality delivery of intrinsically interesting lessons that makes the curriculum so effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school environment is supervised well, with proper checks and risk assessments in place. Pupils feel safe. An exceptional atmosphere of warm, trusting and respectful relationships permeates the school and creates a productive atmosphere for learning.

The school monitors pupils' progress well, taking effective action when they underachieve. Nevertheless, they sometimes lack specific and consistent enough advice to improve further.

There is good partnership with parents to promote good behaviour and intervene early with problems. As a result, exclusion levels have recently decreased.

A programme of personal, social and health education provides very good careers advice, supplemented by extensive visits and activities to prepare pupils thoroughly for the next stages of education.

The school works well in cooperation with other services such as the police and local churches. Vulnerable pupils are looked after well and the school involves and works well with relevant specialist agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an outstanding leader who creates a very positive learning environment based on respect for individuals. He is ably supported by the senior management team (SMT) and all members of the school community benefit. Teamwork is exemplary. Staff are enabled to work from their own initiative with a clear focus on improving learning. By piloting new developments, improved practices have a long term positive impact. However, at times there is insufficient rigour in ensuring that best practice is shared by all staff.

The management structure of the school has very recently changed as a result of the need for redundancies. The current SMT have managed the change in responsibilities extremely well and have ensured there has been minimal impact on the school as a whole. At the same time, five new heads of department started at the school. These recent changes have led to some inconsistencies, particularly in providing clear ways for them to know whether developments have been successful. The help given to new staff has been very good and they have a clear understanding about the ethos within which they need to work. There is a good capacity to improve.

Strengths and areas for development in the school are effectively identified although there are more outstanding aspects in what it does than the school itself judges. Exemplary self-review is being used to inform developments at the school. Detailed research into the views of pupils has given the school valuable in-depth information. This type of qualitative evaluation is not always clearly presented in documentation but is clearly helping to drive the school forward. There are good examples of the school responding to views expressed. The vast majority of parents who returned the questionnaires feel the school is providing a good education for their child. There is a small minority of parents who are concerned about behaviour but pupils felt that behaviour was always dealt with quickly and that it was not a problem.

Purposeful lesson observations and feedback are linked closely with professional development for staff. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved from a good baseline. The use of teacher-to-teacher, informal observations has also been an

effective tool in enabling staff to analyse their own lessons and share good practice across different departments.

The chair of governors has a good understanding about the needs of the school. Alongside other members of the governing body, he ensures statutory requirements are met and provides effective challenge to the school.

There is a very strong commitment to ensuring productive relationships with local schools, which helps pupils moving from one school to another.

Resources for most curriculum areas are at least satisfactory and sometimes good. There is insufficient ICT equipment and this hampers the use of ICT across the curriculum.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome to your school during the recent inspection. We met and talked to quite a few of you during our two days at the school. We watched some of your lessons and looked at the quality of your work. We were also pleased that so many of your parents wrote to us to tell us what they thought about the school. The vast majority are very pleased with the education the school provides.

Your school is outstanding and its work is based securely on excellent relationships. We found that the teaching at your school is usually good and often outstanding. We agree with your view that staff treat you with respect. They take very good care of you and are very skilled at helping you make decisions for yourselves. As a result, you all make outstanding progress.

We would like the school to ensure all teachers are as effective as the best in enabling you to understand how you can make the best possible progress. The school has a great deal of information about your progress and staff, including your headteacher, know you well as individuals. We think this information could be used more effectively to find out whether systems at the school are working for different groups of pupils.

We were impressed by the roles the school and year councils have taken and pleased that you can have your say about the expected code of conduct in the school. We found your behaviour to be outstanding. You are aware of your own responsibilities for making the school a pleasant place to be and help each other to maintain the happy atmosphere.

The curriculum is interesting and a great many of you take up the additional opportunities on offer including the clubs and residential visits. However, we would like you to have more opportunities to use ICT in different lessons.

Keep up the good work, and thank you for your help.