



William Martin CofE VC Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115100
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290130
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Marina Gough

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Tawneys Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Harlow
Age range of pupils	7–11		Essex CM18 6PW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279 424120
Number on roll (school)	239	Fax number	01279 421595
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Albert Watson
		Headteacher	Mr Peter Wilton
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	4–5 December 2006	290130

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school in Harlow. Most children transfer from the infant school that shares the same site. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A higher than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and disabilities, including four pupils who have statements of special educational needs. There is little mobility, but when a place becomes available it is quickly filled as the school is very popular. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and is working towards 'Healthy Schools' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and effective school where pupils flourish and mature within a supportive and very caring learning environment. The headteacher, staff and governors know the school very well, and their own evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses ties in closely with the inspection findings. The school has moved forward well since its last inspection. With the enthusiasm of the staff and the strong commitment of the senior managers to staff training, the school is well placed for further development.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in school and this is reflected in their very positive attitudes to work, and in their enthusiasm for learning. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is very good and pupils become increasingly mature as they move through the school. Pupils are polite, sociable and helpful. They love talking about their work and always take an active part in lessons. Pupils are keen to take responsibility for aspects of their learning and the school council provides a powerful 'pupil voice'.

By the time pupils leave school, their attainment is above the national average in mathematics and science and close to the national average in English. Overall, they make good progress during their time in school, especially in science which is a subject they really enjoy. In English, pupils make good progress in reading and satisfactory progress in writing. Lower attaining pupils in all year groups struggle with spelling and basic grammar.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers go to a great deal of trouble to make learning exciting for the pupils, who agree that 'learning is fun'. Pupils respond well to high levels of challenge and have a good understanding of how well they learn and what more they need to do to improve their work further. The curriculum is extremely well enhanced by an excellent range of visits and visiting speakers, and pupils talk with animation about the different subjects they study. However, because of the need in the past to boost standards in English and mathematics, the lion's share of the curriculum is given to these subjects leaving only a small amount of time for other subjects. Now that standards have risen well, the school needs to review its curriculum to ensure that a better balance is achieved and that the available time is more fairly distributed.

The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. He has the ability to spot, nurture and promote the talents of individual staff so that they thrive professionally. Members of the senior management team are effective in ensuring the implementation of the school development plan, and in setting a high standard in terms of their own classroom practice. They take a good lead in driving standards forwards and their role in regularly tracking the progress of pupils enables them to highlight accurately areas of whole school strength and weakness. The role of subject leaders is well developed and their input into the school development planning process is much valued. Governors fulfil their role well and do much to support the school in its work. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

In line with its own plans for development, the school should:

- raise standards in writing, especially for the lowest attaining pupils
- ensure that the available teaching time is shared in a well balanced way across all subjects of the national curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 3 varies from year to year but is typically average. By the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven, standards in mathematics and science are above the national average. Pupils of all abilities do well in these subjects and make good progress. In science the pupils' progress is particularly good, reflecting their very positive response to the practical way in which the subject is taught. In English, pupils make good progress in reading. In writing, pupils' progress is satisfactory but could be even better, especially for those who entered the school with slightly below average standards in this area. The school makes very good provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and this group of pupils makes very good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school and pupils are sociable, kind and considerate. Pupils behave very well and have a clear understanding of the school and class rules. Most work hard and maintain high levels of concentration during lessons. They enjoy their learning and take an active part in lessons and activities. The school encourages the pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle and pupils talk with real enthusiasm about the last sponsored 'Healthy Lifestyle Day', which amongst other events featured a short run for staff and pupils and a quiz. Pupils have a good sense of responsibility, and the school council actively represents the views of classmates. Members of the council are confident that, 'they help the school to get better'. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of schooling and adult life. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well and ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. Lessons move at a good pace and are well structured. Questions are often used very well to probe the pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking.

Pupils are encouraged to assess the extent of their learning and to reflect on how they might do better. The learning climate is very positive so that pupils are unafraid of making mistakes and are prepared to tackle new learning with enthusiasm. Pupils in all year groups work very well together on shared tasks, happily exchanging ideas and views. The school makes excellent use of its well trained and experienced team of teaching assistants, and their input has a significant and positive impact on the pupils' learning. Regular assessments take place across all subjects to allow teachers to accurately track the pupils' progress and to identify where there are weaknesses that need addressing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school has worked hard and successfully over recent years to raise standards in English and mathematics, by devoting a significant amount of time to them. Whilst this tactic has been successful, it has reduced the amount of time left for other subjects. As a result, the curriculum currently lacks balance. The school is already looking at ways of making the curriculum more interesting for pupils and is currently trialling a cross-curricular approach with Year 4 pupils which is working well, and is popular with the pupils. It now needs to look at ways of equably sharing the time that is available without compromising the progress pupils make in English and mathematics.

The curriculum has some significant strengths, including the programme for personal, social, health and emotional development, and the healthy lifestyle project. Pupils have access to a wide range of after-school activities. The statutory curriculum is significantly enhanced and extended by many excellent visits and by the input of a wide variety of visiting speakers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The levels of care, support and guidance provided by the school are outstanding. The welfare, safety and well-being of pupils are the shared concern of staff and governors, and pupils are confident that, if they are in trouble, there is always someone on hand to help them. Pupils across all year groups have access to a trained counsellor who liaises with other agencies where necessary to ensure that pupils' needs can be fully met. The practice of setting targets for the pupils is well established and pupils throughout the school know the next steps they need to take to improve their work further. Pupils who attend the 'opportunity unit' benefit from working on practical tasks that challenge them to develop new skills, knowledge and understanding. This particular facility is extremely popular with parents and pupils, and is an innovative and successful way of motivating pupils who are struggling with aspects of their class work. The school makes exceptionally good use of outside agencies to strengthen the pupils' understanding of issues such as drug misuse and 'stranger danger'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. He has a strong sense of purpose and direction and a firm commitment to continuing to raise standards. The senior management team works very well together to implement new initiatives and to measure the school's progress towards its ongoing targets.

All members of the school community have opportunities to express their views and these are carefully analysed and taken into account when finalising the school development plan. There are exceptionally high levels of parental satisfaction, and the partnership between home and school is very effective. Governors are regular visitors to the school and know it well. They carry out their monitoring role effectively and make a good contribution to the school development planning process.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection and gives good value for money. Staff are keen to embrace change and to consider new ideas and approaches. The capacity for the school to improve further is good.

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 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

7 December 2006

Dear Pupils

William Martin Church of England VC Junior School, Tawneys Road, Harlow. Essex.CM18 6PN

I am writing to thank you very much for the kind way you welcomed me into your school when I visited a short while ago. I am pleased to tell you that I think that William Martin is a good school. I was very impressed by how polite and helpful you were, especially when I kept getting lost. You get on well with one another and say that you feel safe in school. I like the effort you are making to learn about living a healthy lifestyle, and the way you help others less fortunate than yourselves through your activities to support charities. The school council is a great way for you to share your ideas with the headteacher and staff, and I know that you are pleased that your views are taken seriously, and often acted upon.

Your results in the SATs are now good and show that you are working hard and trying your best. I am particularly pleased with how well you do in science, but would like you to do even better in writing where some of you still have trouble with spelling and grammar. I thoroughly enjoyed sitting in on your lessons and was pleased with how well you tried to answer your teachers' questions and the way you got on with your work. I know you like the fact that your teachers make lessons fun and the way that they tell you exactly what they expect from you. One of the things I most like about your school is the way that your teachers make your learning interesting by taking you on visits and by providing extra activities after school. However, I would be pleased if during the day you had more time for subjects such as music and art, and I have asked your teachers to see if they can do this.

I think your headteacher does a very good job in making sure that the school runs well. He is very lucky to have the support of your deputy headteacher, the other staff and the governors, all of whom work hard to make sure the school is successful. I hope your Christmas concerts are well received - I certainly enjoyed the rehearsal I saw.

Marina Gough

Lead inspector