

Martins Wood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117285
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	290783
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Heraty
Headteacher	Mr T Evans
Date of previous school inspection	1 - 2 July 2002
School address	Mildmay Road Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 5RT
Telephone number	01438222602
Fax number	01438222603

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards of literacy, the quality of provision in Key Stage 1 and the use of assessment to track pupil progress; by gathering evidence from lesson observations, work scrutinies, pupil interviews, parental questionnaires and assessment records. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Larger than the average primary school, the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those learning English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The social and economic characteristics of the local community are mixed.

The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low. Attainment on entry has varied annually and the proportion of girls and boys in a year group fluctuates. In recent years the school has achieved a number of national awards: National ICT Mark, Specialist Schools Trust National ICT Register, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Football Charter Mark, Expect Respect Seal of Approval, Arts Mark Gold, and Investors in People.

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 school with a number of outstanding features. The range of curriculum opportunities provided is excellent, the educational environment is stimulating, well resourced and particularly well-maintained. A range of curriculum developments have achieved national recognition in recent years. Provision for modern foreign languages is outstanding. Physical education (PE) is taught by a specialist in both Key Stages. Pupils receive the nationally recommended time for sport and pupils commented that this has been an area of marked improvement. The facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) rival that to be found in secondary schools; some of the most effective lessons observed by inspectors used these facilities.

As a result of the school's very positive ethos, the pupils' personal development is outstanding and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development good. Pupils consistently praise the school, they enjoy their learning and behaviour is often very good. Care, welfare and guidance are good. Pastoral care has many very strong features. Pupils know what to do to stay safe and are confident they have an adult they can turn to if they have a problem. However, the school council felt more could be done to check occasional bullying. Although most pupils know what they had to do to improve, the use of assessment to guide teaching and learning varies across the school. More could be done to use the extensive range of assessment data available to enhance the learning, particularly in English. Provision at the school has helped to develop healthy lifestyles well. PE is very popular, most pupils walk to school and the range of healthy food available at lunchtime has been extended. The school's drama and music performances make a significant contribution to the community. The pupils develop good mathematical, scientific and computer skills which contribute to their future economic well-being.

Foundation Stage provision is very good and pupils make good progress, often from a low initial level. Between 2004 and 2006, outcomes at Key Stage 1 were below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The unconfirmed results of the 2007 teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 are more positive than in previous years with efforts to address the weaknesses in the pupils' writing beginning to have an impact.

In the 2006 national tests at Key Stage 2, standards and achievement were good overall. The proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the national expectations was well above average in mathematics and science; however, more able pupils underachieved in their written English. Evidence from a detailed scrutiny of work and a review of the school's data reveals that current standards of writing are satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The pupils' books reveal that despite often possessing good reading skills for their age they lack the confidence to write extended sentences and use descriptive or imaginative vocabulary to attain the higher national curriculum levels.

Teaching and learning are good. The most effective teaching provided clear guidance, challenging tasks and very good interaction between pupils and teachers. In these lessons, high quality questioning sought extended responses that used subject vocabulary accurately. All lessons were well organised but some opportunities to extend learning were missed where pupils could have been more

involved in their own learning. Many of the adults who take supporting roles in the classroom are effective instructors and manage activities well. The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is good; a recently introduced intensive support programme appears to be helping those with the most limited literacy skills.

Overall, leadership and management are good. The school has grown successfully. It has been extensively refurbished and imaginative curriculum developments have been brought forward with energy and clear direction. There is a strong collegiate approach to curriculum development between senior managers and those with a phase responsibility as middle managers. Staff development and support are good. Senior managers were invited to observe teaching with HMI; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. However, the school does not maintain a central record of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and therefore lacks the capacity to effectively correlate, assessment outcomes with classroom methodology. As a result standards and achievement vary significantly between the core subjects.

A number of parents expressed concerns regarding, what in their view were significant levels of homework; pupils commented that they found it 'about right'. Similarly, a number of parents raised questions about the difficult access to the school site via a stepped underpass; the local authority has given governors an undertaking that a pedestrian crossing will be provided close to the school before the start of the next academic year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve standards of achievement in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the quality of the pupils' written work at Key Stage 2.
- Use all monitoring and evaluative evidence rigorously to eliminate the inconsistencies in achievement.

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Annex A

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
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	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	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	2
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

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.



8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Martins Wood Primary School, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 5RT

Thank you for contributing to this inspection. It was very good to meet so many of you and see how much you enjoy being at this school. As inspectors we were impressed by the excellent range of curriculum opportunities provided and the stimulating, well resourced and particularly well-maintained environment in which you learn.

Many of you were very pleased with the opportunities to learn a modern foreign language and the high quality physical education. Many of you said how much you and younger members of your family liked the Foundation Stage. I really enjoyed seeing how well everything works in that area. Your personal development is outstanding and your behaviour is often very good. The pastoral care you receive has many very strong features and most of you understand what to do to improve your work. However, there is more that you can do to improve your writing. Parents can help by checking that you use imaginative words when you are asked to write stories and descriptions. We have asked the school to use its new monitoring systems to see how well you achieve.

The school council felt more could be done to check occasional bullying and the headteacher will talk to you about how you can be involved in this. A number of your parents wrote to me about the need for a 'Zebra' crossing near the school and I understand that work should start on this in the summer holidays.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Martins Wood; it is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Perhaps I will meet you again one day, I hope so.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector