

St Martin's Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126413
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	293553
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Hampton
Headteacher	Vanessa Pile
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001
School address	Shady Bower Salisbury SP1 2RG
Telephone number	01722 554300
Fax number	01722 554305

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. It serves an area with a high level of socio-economic deprivation. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and of those with statements of special educational needs is very high. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is above average. Although the attainment of pupils when they enter the school varies from group to group, it is generally very low. The headteacher has been absent this year and two acting headteachers have filled the role. The current acting headteacher has been appointed as the permanent headteacher from September 2007. This is the school's first inspection since the infant and junior schools were amalgamated in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school providing a sound education for its pupils. The school's mission statement reflects its strongly Christian ethos, which is at the heart of all the school's work. The school seeks to 'educate and develop each child as a unique and valued individual' and it certainly strives to do this through good commitment to the all-round development of the pupils. Staff know the pupils very well, understand their needs and try to ensure that these are met. As a result, the care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good. Great importance is placed on the support provided for pupils' personal development and well-being and as a result they make good progress in this area. The wide range of rewards and sanctions is effective in improving pupils' attendance and ensuring their behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and eagerly take on responsibilities such as raising funds for a range of charities. The activities devised to raise funds for a local children's hospice illustrate their growing understanding of the need to care for those around them. They have a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle and the need to keep safe. Children in the Reception classes make good progress in their personal development, learning how to work and play together happily.

'If learning's fun, children listen', summed up one pupil when asked if lessons were enjoyable. It reflected the observations made of teaching and learning during this inspection. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy positive relationships with their teachers and interact well with them. However, teaching and learning overall are only satisfactory because good teaching is not sufficiently widespread in all classes to enable pupils to make consistently good progress. Overall, standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in English are average by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve well. The school is trying hard to raise standards in mathematics and science to match this good achievement. At present, the curriculum does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to engage in practical problem-solving and investigative activities in mathematics and science. As a result, pupils have too little scope to broaden their understanding and practise the skills they are developing. The good provision in the Reception classes ensures that children get a flying start to their schooling, enabling them to make good progress. In Year 6, pupils are challenged effectively through exciting and motivating activities. As a result of this good teaching, they do well. Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, there is a good range of visits and out-of-school clubs to enrich learning. However, there are few occasions for pupil to benefit from more exciting and creative approaches to their learning, such as drama, on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has accurately recognised the key areas for improvement. Actions taken to improve pupils' progress, particularly in English, have been effective, although there is more to do in mathematics and science. A rigorous programme is in place to monitor the school's performance and this is particularly effective in English, mathematics and science. However, the procedures to monitor other subjects are too complicated and time consuming to enable them to be fulfilled effectively. Parents are very supportive of the school; as one commented, 'The staff are all committed and enthusiastic. If I have had any concerns they have been dealt with swiftly and efficiently'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, investigate and experiment in mathematics and science.

- Build into the curriculum more opportunities to develop pupils' creativity and independent learning skills.
- Simplify the monitoring and evaluation programme so it enables co-ordinators to make more useful and constructive evaluations of their subject areas.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Reception class because of the wide range of interesting experiences offered across all areas of learning. Despite this, however, most have not achieved the goals expected by the time they join Year 1. Across the school, standards are a little below average, although pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils make good progress in English because the actions taken to raise standards in reading and writing are having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. A short session at the start of each day enables pupils to practise their literacy skills and has led to good improvement in handwriting, punctuation and spelling. The school exceeded the targets set in English last summer, but did not meet them in mathematics. In mathematics and science, progress is satisfactory but pupils have too few chances to use their skills to solve problems and carry out experiments. The targets set for this year are very challenging. Pupils' work suggests that they are likely to be achieved in English, and possibly in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English for the first time make good progress because of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' moral and social development is strong and this is reflected in their good attitudes and behaviour to each other and their concern for those around them. The play-leaders scheme, whereby older pupils lead activities for younger pupils, keeps the playground a happy and harmonious place. Pupils are thoughtful and the way a calm and reflective atmosphere is promoted in assemblies contributes to their good spiritual development. Pupils develop a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and are gaining a good awareness of being part of a multi-ethnic Britain. The school council positively influences change and developments. Pupils are prepared appropriately for future life because of the strong emphasis on developing social and life skills as well as basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children learn effectively in the Reception class because teaching is good and activities match the needs of children well. In Years 1 to 6, teachers plan lessons carefully. They know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear. As a consequence, pupils are confident about tackling their work. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. However, it is not consistently so and, as a result, pupils' progress occasionally slows. Occasionally, tasks are not well matched to their needs and so they are not always appropriately challenged. This is particularly so when teachers are too reliant on worksheets. Good support

is provided for pupils with learning difficulties. Marking is good. It usually identifies what pupils need to do to make progress and pupils say it helps them understand how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In the Reception class, a good range of interesting learning opportunities is provided which appeals to the children and enables them to make good progress. In Years 1 to 6, arrangements for the development of pupils' literacy skills are good. However, for mathematics and science, provision is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their investigative skills. In addition, there is insufficient focus on creative approaches, such as drama, in order to provide stimulating learning opportunities. A good programme is in place to support pupils' personal development. The school plans satisfactorily to ensure the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language are met. Pupils with learning difficulties are well provided for. Pupils enjoy the good range of activities provided after school which broaden their scope for learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and this contributes well to their enjoyment of school. Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure are well established and pupils are confident that adults look after them and support them well. The school monitors pupils' personal development very well. Pupils have increasingly challenging academic targets and most know what they need to do to improve. However, the target-setting systems are rather complex and sometimes confusing for pupils. The school works closely with a wide range of outside agencies. These contribute well to the good personal support and guidance that is provided for pupils who have learning difficulties. In addition, the school has very good strategies to deal with the challenging behaviour that is occasionally displayed by a small minority of pupils. Good procedures ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher has fulfilled the post well and ensured that the school's commitment to pupils' personal development has been sustained as well as vigorously pursuing the improvement of academic standards. There are robust monitoring systems in place, which quickly identify weaknesses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. For example, the development of basic writing skills was identified as a concern and the success of actions taken is evident in the progress pupils have made. Although subject co-ordinators are diligent, the programme to monitor and evaluate work in the other subjects is too complex. It does not give co-ordinators sufficient time to make useful and constructive evaluations and to take actions to address weaknesses, before moving on to the next subject. As a result, the impact on helping to improve standards is limited.

The governing body is very supportive of the school. Their monitoring role is developing and they have recognised that they need to step up their level of challenge. They have already begun to do this through taking a far more hands-on approach to the setting of the budget.

The headteacher, staff and governors all have a satisfactory picture of how well the school is performing and there is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Martin's Voluntary Aided Primary School, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2RG

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a sound education and is working hard to make it better than this. This is what we thought about your school:

- You behave well and are really keen to learn.
- You make good progress in English and your teachers are working hard to help you improve your mathematics and science.
- You take seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- The curriculum covers all the subjects you are supposed to learn and you enjoy the visits and visitors, which bring learning alive for you.
- Teachers help you to learn effectively so that you make the progress you should.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your acting headteacher knows what needs to be done to make learning more interesting and effective for you and she and your teachers are working hard to bring this about.

There are some things we think can be improved:

- We think you need more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics and to carry out investigations in science to help you to do better in these subjects.
- The curriculum is not as exciting as it could be and we have asked the school to give you more opportunities to tackle your learning in different ways.
- Teachers need to find simpler ways of making sure all subjects are improving.

We hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes,

Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector