

William Martin CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School, Harlow

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115101
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311832
Inspection dates	20–21 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Albert Watson
Headteacher	Ms Liz Kinsella
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	Tawneys Road Harlow Essex CM18 6PW
Telephone number	01279 424122
Fax number	01279 438128

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children join the Nursery at the age of three, attending part-time. They enter Reception in September or January before they are five, with a few children who have not attended the school's Nursery. At the age of seven, pupils usually transfer to the Junior School on the same site. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The pupils are mainly White British, while others come from a diversity of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or with a statement of special educational need, is broadly average. Children start school with skills, particularly in language, that are less well developed than is usual at this age, though this varies widely.

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 gives children a good education. This reflects the school's own evaluation of itself, and the views of parents. The school has a deservedly good reputation in the community. Children's personal development is good and parents are pleased with the progress their children make. They appreciate the way that the school develops pupils' confidence and social skills, speaking, for example, of a child being 'gently moulded into a very pleasant person'. Pupils enjoy school. They learn to cooperate and to consider the needs of others.

Children achieve well, whatever their starting point, and make good progress in all years. As a result, they reach standards that are broadly average overall and, in some year groups, above average. Standards have risen over the last three years as the school has set itself challenging targets and succeeded in achieving them.

Teaching is good and pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are developed well. Teachers create a calm and purposeful atmosphere, so that pupils set to work with a will and concentrate on the task in hand. They participate with delight in action songs and exercises that reinforce learning, developing good physical coordination and concentration.

Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum that includes a good balance of practical and creative activities. The school offers a good range of special curriculum days, visits and clubs that encourage wide interests. Pupils learn about healthy living and have good opportunities for exercise. They sing with great enthusiasm. The school cares well for pupils and provides good support for those with particular individual needs.

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly-appointed headteacher is building effectively on the work of her predecessor in providing clear direction and setting sights high. However, the school does not yet have a fully functioning management team to share in working for improvement across the school as a whole. There is a lack of consistent leadership within subjects and in different parts of the school. The school's evaluation of how well it is doing is accurate. It recognises the need to involve the whole staff more in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and sharing good practice. Governors support the school effectively and have a clear understanding of its priorities. The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection, as seen in rising standards, and has a good capacity to continue to improve. Effective steps are now being taken to broaden leadership and to harness the efforts of all staff in working together towards schoolwide goals.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in Nursery and Reception and are taught well. By the end of Reception, the majority of the children reach the levels expected nationally in all the areas of learning. Mathematical development is strong, and children's personal, social and emotional development is nurtured well so that they have good attitudes to learning. Children make good progress overall in communication, language and literacy, though the school recognises the need for a more consistent approach in introducing children to sounds and letters, from the Nursery onwards. The Nursery provides a rich environment with many activities, indoors and outdoors, that extend children's learning. A small outdoor play area has been recently created for Reception, but this has yet to be fully equipped. Teamwork across the Foundation Stage is

developing, though restricted by the physical separation of Nursery and Reception. The school recognises the need for leadership to draw staff together and further strengthen continuity for children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Define the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and subject coordinators, and develop leadership across the Foundation Stage.
- Extend systems for evaluating teaching and learning, and sharing good practice, to involve all staff in working together for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Although many start with skills below those expected nationally, particularly their language skills, good teaching enables them to reach standards that are broadly average for their age by the time they leave. Standards have improved in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics and this improvement is being sustained. Pupils enjoy reading and become confident writers, achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. However, some lag behind, and the school has identified the need for more systematic teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) and more targeted support where progress is slow. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the support they receive. Those who are learning English as an additional language also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. They learn about and celebrate other cultures and ways of life, for example, singing songs from other countries and languages. Attendance has improved and is above average. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and a growing appreciation of the value of exercise. They are alert to ways of keeping safe. Pupils cooperate with adults and with each other. Behaviour is good in lessons, and generally harmonious at playtimes. Pupils understand the importance of helping others to be happy and they are proud of their contribution as 'Playground Friends'. Pupils from Reception onwards participate as members of 'Pupils' Voice'. They offer suggestions to improve the school and help to raise funds for many charities. Links with the church are strong, further promoting the pupils' sense of community. The school gives pupils a good grounding in skills that prepare them well for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage classes well, keeping pupils engaged and interested. Teachers have a good knowledge of the curriculum and plan carefully to ensure that it is covered thoroughly. Although pupils are sometimes expected to listen for too long, most teaching is often lively and stimulating, particularly when pupils are encouraged to participate actively and physically. Teaching assistants work effectively with groups and individuals within the class, helping pupils to keep up. Work is mostly planned with different ability groups in mind and teaching sometimes challenges more able pupils to explore further, although this is not always the case. Teaching

is effective and thorough but staff do not have enough opportunity to observe and learn from each other, in order to share and extend the good practice which is evident in many areas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The emphasis placed on English and mathematics ensures pupils make good progress in these subjects. Pupils have good opportunities to learn and apply skills in ICT. In order to improve the curriculum further, key learning skills, including problem-solving, communication and self-evaluation are now being identified in each area of work. Visits, visitors and themed events, such as the science and music weeks, help to stimulate interest in learning. The curriculum is also enriched by a good range of clubs and sporting activities. Work towards the Healthy School's award has generated a strong focus on healthy living.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school makes secure arrangements for child protection, and good procedures are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. Good behaviour is promoted and the school deals effectively with any untoward incidents. The school has introduced procedures for tracking the progress made by pupils each term. This is helping to highlight where additional support or challenge is needed, though an overview of progress from Nursery to Year 2 has yet to be established. In some classes, good practice is seen where pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work, and the work of others, in order to understand how to improve. Marking and target-setting often help pupils to focus their efforts, though this varies between classes. The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties are identified early. The special educational needs coordinator provides effective support, working closely with learning support assistants and class teachers. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are supported effectively. The school works well in partnership with parents and external agencies to support the learning and well-being of all pupils, whatever their individual needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leaders have evaluated its performance accurately. The recently appointed headteacher is building effectively on the school's existing strengths. She is working to harness the efforts of the whole staff team in bringing about further improvement. However, at present, the role of the management team lacks clarity. Subject coordinators are willing and enthusiastic, but have had little opportunity to develop their roles. As a result, they are not yet fully effective in providing subject leadership across the school. Neither are all managers sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and learning to gain a view on what could be better and how to achieve this. The governing body helps to shape the school's positive ethos. It has developed its oversight of the school and has a good understanding of the school's achievements and priorities for the future. The school runs smoothly and resources are used well to support pupils' learning. The school gives good value for money.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of 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	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 February 2008

Dear Children

William Martin CE Infant School, Harlow, CM18 6PN

We enjoyed visiting your school this week. Thank you for being friendly and telling us about what you do at school. We especially enjoyed your singing in assembly. We thought that you were very good at joining in and remembering all the actions.

We were pleased to hear how you enjoy doing jobs to help other people, like being a playground friend. We noticed how well you concentrate and behave in lessons. This is helping you to learn, and to get better at your work. We are glad that you enjoy reading and writing, and we were impressed by how far you can go with numbers. We are not surprised that you enjoy school. Everyone is good at looking after you and giving you interesting things to do.

The teachers will be putting their heads together to share good ideas about the best ways of teaching you. The headteacher and all the staff want to work as a team to make sure that you learn as well as possible in each subject and in each part of the school. You can help, too, by thinking for yourselves about how well you understand, and how you can make your work better.

We hope that you go on having a good time at school and trying your very best.

With best wishes,

Joy Richardson

Lead inspector