

# Folkestone, St Martin's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118675
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313042
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Gane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Love
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 June 2002
<b>School address</b>	Horn Street Folkestone CT20 3JJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 238888
<b>Fax number</b>	01303 238888

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Martin's is a little smaller than average. More pupils join and leave the school partway through their education than in most schools. These 'mobile' pupils include several from Gurkha families garrisoned at the local army barracks. Around 14% of the pupils are Nepalese, but only a very small number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average.

## 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 that lives up to its motto: 'faith and endeavour'. Parents appreciate the school's 'Christian values and ethos', with, for example, its own dedicated prayer room. They are pleased, however, that St Martins 'does not ignore the religious views of other faiths', including those of the many, mainly Hindu, Nepalese families. The school's leadership team have an accurate picture of the school's many strengths, and their rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, and of each pupil's progress, has enabled them to put in place well-focused support to boost the performance of pupils who are at risk of falling behind. As a result, there has been a steady improvement in standards, with the enthusiastic and well-motivated pupils increasingly endeavouring to achieve their best.

Standards are above average, representing good progress from pupils' generally average starting points. In an area with '11 plus' selection, parents are particularly pleased that each year, more than a third of the Year 6 pupils are successful at winning grammar school places. Nonetheless, more able pupils have not always done as well as they could in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests. This is because they are not always set challenging enough work in lessons. New schemes, including weekly 'Smart Group' sessions, give pupils an opportunity to try new things but are particularly extending more able pupils. They help to enhance a curriculum where subjects are imaginatively linked together to, as pupils themselves say, 'make learning fun'. This, along with the very effective arrangements for pupils' care and welfare, contributes to pupils' good personal development. Several parents comment on how much their children love school, from the excellent start they get in the Reception class through to Year 6. As one explained, 'The ethos of the school has ensured that the children have grown into caring, confident young people with bright ideas and lots of friends.' They are prepared well for secondary school. Pupils take an active role in the school and wider community, are made to feel safe and secure, and have an excellent appreciation of the need for a healthy lifestyle. Many take part in the impressive range of sports and other clubs, including some run by parents and governors, and they are willing to eschew tasty but unhealthy foods to endure a less appetising healthy diet.

Teaching is good because it motivates the pupils and helps them to make good progress. Lessons are mostly well planned, with varied activities that appeal to pupils' interests. In some lessons, teachers allow pupils too long for activities and this slows the pace of learning. Pupils make notably better progress in lessons where their teachers set them short, sharp tasks. Marking has improved since the last inspection but much variation in quality still remains; whilst the best marking identifies clearly for pupils how they can improve their work, some comprises merely ticks and general words of encouragement.

As parents acknowledge, 'The improvements since the last inspection have been immense', particularly in information and communication technology (ICT). The progress the school has made since the last inspection, together with school leaders' constant striving for new ways of boosting pupils' enjoyment and achievement, show St Martin's good capacity for continued improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

School leaders have drawn very well on support and advice from the local authority to improve provision for children in the Foundation Stage. This has really paid off. Outstanding teaching

now helps the children to get off to a cracking start in the Reception class. Parents praise the 'great links with the church and pre-school' which help the children to quickly settle in. As a result, children learn to enjoy and follow the school's orderly routines in what parents describe as 'a very safe and happy environment'. From a starting point that is in line with the skills expected nationally for children of this age, they make excellent progress to reach standards which in 2007 were well above average. Almost all children are working securely within the early learning goals and many exceed them. Children are making similarly excellent progress this year. This is due in no small part to the staff's very high expectations of what the children can achieve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- provide work in all lessons that challenges and extends the more able pupils
- increase the pace of learning by not allowing too long for activities in lessons
- ensure that all marking gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to do better.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

Standards are on an improving trend. Although Year 6 test scores in English, mathematics and science were still in the average range in 2007, the school's detailed tracking of pupils' progress shows these are continuing to rise. This is not a school that focuses on these core subjects to the exclusion of others. The standard of work in art, for example, is particularly impressive. Improvement is most marked in the Foundation Stage where standards are now well above average. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they benefit from good support. The same is true for those pupils who join the school partway through their primary education and for those pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Some of these pupils make spectacular progress. It is more able pupils who do not always do as well as they could, because they are not always set work that challenges them to the full.

### **Personal development and well-being**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils develop into confident and mature young citizens as they progress through the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils treat each other with kindness, for example with 'buddies' supporting younger pupils in the playground and helping to sort out minor squabbles. Relationships and racial harmony are strengths of the school. Pupils gain a real understanding of the different cultures represented in the school through learning about different lifestyles and celebrating different religious festivals.

Pupils are proud of their school and make significant improvements to the environment, both in school and in the community. They help clear up litter, voice their ideas through the local youth forum and distribute harvest gifts. They love coming to school, and this is shown in the high rates of attendance. When pupils are asked to stick at the same activities for too long, however, they sometimes drift off task and lose interest. Behaviour is good. Even the youngest children respond well to the 'Good to be Green' system of rewards and understand the consequences of their actions.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers give pupils a clear explanation of ideas and tasks, greatly aided by creative use of interactive whiteboards. For example, in a numeracy lesson, an animated sequence on Eurostar destinations enlivened a discussion on data and drawing bar charts. On the whole, teachers match work well to the range of abilities in each class, although more able pupils are not always given work that makes them think things out for themselves. Although the school's own monitoring shows some variation in the effectiveness of teaching assistants, they are frequently very well used and their role includes the recording of pupils' contributions during whole-class teaching. Their support helps pupils with learning difficulties or other additional needs, such as for language.

Often lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. During group work, teachers bring the class together to share ideas. This helps pupils to maintain concentration and improve their work. However, sometimes pupils are left to work on activities for too long. Where this happens, some pupils complete the work and have time to spare whilst others lose interest and drift off task.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school provides an exciting curriculum geared to enabling pupils to broaden their academic and personal skills. Some 'Smart Groups' successfully challenge able pupils and encourage them to think for themselves. For example, a group of older pupils investigated the connection between the circumference and diameter of a circle, concluded that the ratio was always the same and discovered the importance of pi. However, as pupils choose which group they wish to attend, the work does not always offer them the right level of challenge.

Artwork is exceptional and, throughout the school, pupils' work is celebrated through stimulating displays. ICT was a key issue for improvement at the last inspection, and the school has worked hard to update its facilities. In lessons, pupils and staff are confident in their use of interactive whiteboards. Links with a local secondary school enable pupils to benefit from specialist teaching in ICT.

Pupils appreciate the extensive range of clubs, from stamp collecting to yoga and cookery. Trips, visitors and residential visits deepen pupils' understanding, for example of growing up during the Second World War.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Staff provide a supportive and caring environment where pupils thrive and develop into confident young people. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Pupils know that they can trust adults when they are worried or upset. The school works closely with families who are experiencing personal difficulties and make good use of the expertise of outside agencies to support pupils and their families.

Pupils with learning difficulties are given good support. Their individual education plans include clear targets for improvement. Through regular tracking of progress, early identification of underachievement and appropriate intervention programmes, these pupils are helped to make

good progress. Academic guidance for all pupils is good. Pupils know their individual targets and how well they are doing. They are involved in assessing when they have achieved their targets. The most effective marking gives pupils very clear advice about how they can improve their work. Not all marking offers such helpful guidance.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

In this well-run school, staff work in close partnership with parents, who feel well informed through regular newsletters and the school's attractive website. Several parents commented that the headteacher is always approachable and helpful in dealing with any problems that arise. School leaders have been particularly effective in driving improvement through rigorous monitoring. This has resulted in steady improvements in teaching and learning which, in turn, have led to rising standards. School leaders have also piloted a series of initiatives aimed at broadening pupils' education and giving them opportunities to learn in different ways. Not all of these different programmes are quite as evident in every class and school leaders have not evaluated them all to fully gauge their effectiveness in raising standards. Governors are supportive of the school but many of them are new to their role. They visit regularly and are keen to further develop their expertise.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martin's CofE Primary School, Folkestone CT20 3JJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. You are rightly proud of St Martin's. It is a good, well-run school where you are increasingly making good progress and doing well. The children in the Reception Year get off to a particularly impressive start!

You told us how much you enjoy school and we were very pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how very well you get on with each other. St Martin's is certainly a friendly place where staff look after you well and help you to feel safe and secure. Many of you told us how important it is to keep healthy, even if that means eating foods that are not always as tasty as you would prefer. You are keen to learn and you told us how teachers make your learning interesting and fun. We were especially impressed by the high quality of your artwork around the school and by the great range of clubs that so many of you go to.

Although you are doing well at St Martin's, we think some of you could do even better and so we have asked your teachers to make sure they all set work that keeps you on your toes – and not just literally, like in the 'wake and shake' sessions! We could see that sometimes when you are given too long to complete a piece of work, some of you get restless and do not learn so well. We have therefore asked the school to make sure that you are not given too long for tasks in lessons.

We were very pleased to see that you all make good use of your targets to help you learn. Some of your teachers' marking is also helping you to improve your work, but some does not give you quite so much help. We have asked the school to see to it that all the marking is as good as the best.

You can help, too, by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers what you need to do to make your work even better.

Best wishes, Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector



3 March 2008

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Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Selwyn Ward', written in a cursive style.

Selwyn Ward  
Lead Inspector