

St Martin's CofE (Aided) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125142
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315164
Inspection date	13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Conibeer
Headteacher	Mr C J Poole
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2004
School address	Ashley Road Epsom KT18 7AD
Telephone number	01372 721996
Fax number	01372 739176

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. He interviewed pupils, teachers and governors, looked at pupils' work, observed lessons and break activities and analysed documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

St Martin's is larger than the average primary school. It has fewer than average pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The school has above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this proportion is increasing. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication or other specific learning difficulties. The school has average numbers of pupils from minority backgrounds. Ninety percent of pupils speak English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Martin's Church of England (Aided) School provides a good education and it is a happy place to learn and develop. The school has a positive ethos and relationships are good. As one Year 6 pupil put it, 'It's like one big family.'

Pupils enter the school with standards that are just above average. The strong commitment to learning shared by both teachers and pupils ensures that achievement is good and standards at the end of Year 6 are above, and for some well above, average. Standards are similar in English, mathematics and science. However, in 2007, the results of Year 6 national assessments in mathematics were lower than usual. The school has addressed this issue on a broad front, identifying a number of reasons for under-performance and taking rigorous counter-measures. These have been very successful and have led to improvements in teaching. Mathematics standards have risen in 2008 and are now above, and in some cases well above average, as are those in English and science. The inclusive nature of the school, which provides well for those pupils with problems such as speech, language and communication difficulties and the small group for whom English is not their first language, ensures that all groups of pupils achieve well.

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Systems to keep pupils safe are comprehensive and effective. Pupils are content that their school environment is safe and are confident that there are always adults they can turn to, should the need arise. Many pupils know their targets and are involved jointly with their teachers in checking on their progress towards meeting them. In this way, they develop a clear understanding of the next steps to take in their learning. However, sometimes pupils forget their targets because they are not written down. Academic guidance is promoted well by good marking of pupils' work. Teachers' comments are pertinent and encouraging and pupils respond to these very well. One outcome of this is that work in books is well presented.

The school institutes regular checks on teaching. This ensures a consistency in lessons so that good teaching promotes good learning. There are a number of strengths in teaching. Lessons are thoroughly planned so they rattle along at a good pace and this helps maintain pupils' concentration. Planning provides well for the range of abilities found in classrooms. For example, teaching assistants are well briefed on their roles and so are able to offer effective support where it is most needed. Classroom relationships are extremely positive. Pupils work very well in pairs or groups, showing great maturity when tackling tasks together or alone. Good classroom management promotes very good behaviour and attitudes and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning.

The curriculum is good. It is enhanced by lively modern foreign languages teaching. The school's provision of information and communications technology (ICT) has improved since the previous inspection. However, the school has correctly identified that a lack of equipment means that pupils are still not able to make enough use of ICT to support their learning in different subjects. Pupils are pleased with opportunities to take part in after-school clubs, particularly in sport, and participation rates are high. Residential and day trips enrich pupils' experiences and numerous visitors, such as representatives of environmental groups, provide interesting learning experiences.

Good teaching and care help ensure that pupils' personal development is good. Boys and girls of all ages get on very well with one another and invariably are mature and courteous. They

like their lessons and enjoy many elements of school life. They are especially keen on the friendships that develop. The school engenders an atmosphere of respect and pupils report that bullying is unusual but, should it occur, the school deals with it firmly. Pupils know the factors that help them grow up as healthy adults. They are keen to take part in sports and also enjoy the healthier food available in what they call the 'Jamie Oliver lunches'. Helped by good personal, social and health education, they show good awareness of how to stay safe, both in and out of school. Pupils are well involved in local community activities. The school forum is highly regarded as an opportunity for pupils' views to be aired. Pupils say that it is not just a talking shop but a place where their suggestions become reality, such as the introduction of a 'fruit break' to refresh them every morning. Opportunities to raise funds and handle money assist in their preparations for later life. Good achievement in developing English and mathematics skills also contributes well to their future economic well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is above average.

Parents' views of the school as expressed in the inspection survey are mixed. The majority are happy with the school and like its positive ethos, but a significant group expressed concerns. Almost a third were unhappy about the way the school sought their views and reacted to their concerns. The inspection found no other evidence to confirm this opinion. This is the first time this view has become evident, because the school's own surveys show satisfaction with this area. Teachers and governors, who are regularly available to listen to parents' views, were also unaware of this issue. Other concerns expressed by minorities, such as those about teaching, leadership and management and taking account of pupils' views, cannot be substantiated by the inspection. In fact, there is considerable inspection evidence that is contrary to these concerns.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well and is committed to providing high quality education. The school's self-evaluation is clear and helpful. Planning for the future involves all staff and governors and identifies the correct priorities, providing the right resources to ensure their accomplishment. For example, shortcomings in the building, parts of which are at the end of their useful lives, are about to be addressed by a major building programme. A further example is the way staff have worked closely together to reverse the 2007 fall in mathematics results. Governors monitor carefully. They are very well informed about the school and work alongside staff to both challenge and support them. The school has made good strides in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection and, based on its recent track record, its capacity for improvement in the future is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve ICT facilities and equipment to provide more opportunities for their use in all curriculum subjects.
- Address accommodation difficulties caused by lack of space and the deteriorating fabric in parts of the building.
- Identify the reasons for parents' concerns and act to address them.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martin's CofE (Aided) Junior School, Epsom, KT18 7AD

Thank you for your friendly welcome when I recently visited the school to inspect it. I enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school. I am writing to tell you what I found out.

I agree with you that St Martin's is a good school. You told me it was a nice place to grow and learn and I agree. Thanks to the hard work of you and your teachers, you achieve well and the standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Your teachers make sure you learn well by making lessons interesting and well planned and you do your bit by concentrating and behaving well. The subjects and topics you study (known as the curriculum) are interesting and varied.

You are well cared for at school and this helps your good personal development. Because you get on so well with your teachers, you know there is always someone around to assist you or give good advice. This helps you grow in maturity and you have a good grasp of important areas such as how to stay healthy. Your headteacher and other staff lead and manage the school well and get great help from governors. They plan well for the present and the future. Even though it is a good school, I agree with your teachers that there are still some ways it can be better. These are:

- the school should keep improving its computers, so that you can use ICT in more lessons
- some parts of the buildings need improving, and this will happen soon
- some parents are worried about the school and need better information; you can do your part to reassure them by telling them more about everyday life at St Martin's.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was delightful meeting you.

With all good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead Inspector