

St Martin's Garden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133290
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	328689
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	215
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	29
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Cross
Headteacher	Philip Pope
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lympsham Green Odd Down Bath BA2 2UN
Telephone number	01225 832112
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is in the single Reception class. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion from minority ethnic families is increasing as is the proportion learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A high proportion of these pupils have autism and learn within the Margaret Coates Autistic Centre, which is an integral part of the school.

There is a children's centre on site, including a nursery, that is not managed by the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement. This is a satisfactory school, which is improving at a steady rate. In the last year, the headteacher, with very strong support from the senior leadership team, governors and local authority, has improved pupils' learning and the use of assessment to track pupils' progress. The school is better placed to identify any pupils who underachieve and to put in place effective strategies to help them improve. The impact of these strategies has led to a discernable upward trend in standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, including a greater proportion achieving the higher Level 5 in national tests. Based on the progress made since its last inspection, the school has the satisfactory capacity to improve.

Children start school with standards that are well below expectations for their age, especially in early language skills and noticeably in speaking and listening. Satisfactory provision in the EYFS means that children make satisfactory progress, but standards remain below average at the end of Reception. Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are exceptionally low. Children do not spend enough time learning outdoors. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory and although clearly improving, standards at the end of Year 6 remain below average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whilst there are pockets of good teaching, there is not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all lessons. There are strengths in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which enable many of these pupils to make good progress. However, in many lessons, teachers' planning does not meet the needs of all pupils, especially the potentially more able, with the result they do not always make enough progress in lessons. In Year 2, standards have fallen for the last four years and in 2008 were exceptionally low in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in writing were higher than reading, which goes against the national trend. Evidence from the inspection and the school's data, indicates that the downward trend is reversed, with green shoots of recovery evident. The successful teaching of letters and sounds in the EYFS and in Years 1 and 2 has a significant impact on slowly improving standards in reading and writing. In the EYFS and Years 1 and 2, classrooms do not promote a love of reading sufficiently well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and supported by satisfactory care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their much-improved attendance over the last two years. Behaviour is good. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic in wanting to answer questions in lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and many participate in sporting activities in school and/or out of school. The care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good as they are for those learning English as an additional language. Pupils know their targets and their next steps in learning. While pupils are safeguarded adequately in school, the records kept are not up to date or easily accessible to allow quick checks that all statutory requirements for safeguarding and risk assessments are in place. Provision for pupils in the Margaret Coates Centre is good. As a result of good teaching, these pupils make good progress in their learning. There are strengths in pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Occasionally, in lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. Leadership and management in the centre are good and ensure that pupils are cared for extremely well and that they enjoy an effective and stimulating curriculum. The accommodation is outstanding and contributes successfully to pupils' good achievement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

On starting the EYFS, children benefit from the school's effective links with the children's centre and a smooth transition from the nursery class. Parents are very appreciative of the induction process when their children start in the main school. From very low starting points, children make satisfactory progress although standards remain below average by the time they start Year 1. In knowledge and understanding of the world, standards are well below average and this links to children not having sufficient time to experience learning outdoors. Children are very happy and benefit from very good relationships with staff. Teachers and support staff work very hard to develop children's speaking and listening skills through regular discussions and questioning children about what they are learning. The teaching of letters and sounds is good and has a positive impact on developing children's early reading and writing skills.

The quality of care is good, with children learning in a safe and caring learning environment. Although underused, the outdoor learning area is safe and secure. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with strengths in systems for monitoring and assessing children's progress. However, insufficient focus is given to children having the opportunity to work outdoors regularly and at a time of their own choosing. There are effective links with outside agencies, including speech therapy to support children who have difficulties in communicating. Partnerships with parents are good and they are welcomed into the classroom to provide valuable additional support for children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teachers' planning in Years 1 to 6 so that it meets the needs of more able pupils.
- Improve EYFS children's opportunities for outdoor learning and their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Ensure that records for safeguarding and risk assessments are up to date and in a form that shows the statutory information clearly.
- Improve the quality of reading corners for younger pupils to encourage and promote a love of reading.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

The year-on-year decline in standards at the end of Year 2 is being to be reversed through more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and putting strategies in place to tackle pupils' underachievement. As a result, in the current Year 2, there are clear signs of improvement in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils respond positively to the teaching of letters and sounds and this is improving their achievement, especially in reading and writing. At times, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in guided reading sessions.

Standards at the end of Year 6 while below average are rising and this is supported by inspection evidence and the provisional results of the most recent National Curriculum tests. Encouragingly, there is a marginal increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English

and mathematics. Achievement based on their starting points at the beginning of Year 3 is satisfactory.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans because of good teaching, especially high quality support from teaching assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and benefit from the school reaching out into its community to find, for example, speakers of Polish who work with pupils from Poland to develop their knowledge of scientific vocabulary.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils have a much better understanding of local cultures than they do of the wider community within the United Kingdom. Pupils feel that when unacceptable behaviour occurs adults deal with it effectively. A number of pupils find boisterous play in the playground a concern. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy taking responsibilities, including being house captains, librarians and recycling monitors. At present, the school council does not make a significant contribution to day-to-day school life. Pupils appreciate the way their successes both in and out of school are celebrated by staff and their peers. Preparation for their next stage of life is satisfactory. Girls benefit from activities planned to raise their self-esteem, such as through the 'Girls Allowed' project. Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting and cultural events in school and in the city of Bath.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their lessons and say that teachers make learning fun. Teachers are skilled in involving pupils in question and answer sessions, including engaging boys and girls equally. Learning intentions and success criteria are shared with pupils at the start of lessons. There are strengths in the teaching of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example in giving them practical tests at the start of lessons to reinforce new learning. Teaching assistants provide very good support for such pupils, together with those learning English as an additional language. Teachers' planning is detailed but it does not consistently meet the needs of potentially more able pupils in terms of challenge and extension. In literacy lessons, there is evidence of the overuse of photocopied worksheets. Such sheets restrict the development of free and unaided writing, especially for more able pupils. Teachers' marking is effective and pupils say that it does help them to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The school is passionate in its wish to provide pupils with a wide ranging curriculum with opportunities for pupils to see, understand and use the links between subjects. In the EYFS, current planning does not focus sufficiently on knowledge and understanding of the world and in Years 1 to 6, it does not meet the needs of more-able pupils. Curriculum enrichment is good, especially in sport and the arts. The school is very proactive in participating in cultural events within the city. Attendance at extra-curricular clubs is good and contributes significantly to pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are supported through a good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education and the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Individual education plans are of good quality and the school makes very effective use of outside agencies to support these pupils. Those learning English as an additional language receive equally good support. Currently, the school's records in relation to safeguarding and risk assessments are not up to date. They are in a form which means it is difficult to assess whether the school meets statutory requirements.

Academic guidance is good. Through effective marking and the use of targets, pupils have a greater understanding of how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve their learning. Such guidance plays an increasingly important part in helping pupils improve their rate of achievement and level of attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Over the last year, the headteacher, with very effective support from the senior leadership team, governors and the local authority has tackled successfully the issues from the last inspection. The school is in a much stronger position in relation to monitoring teaching and learning to gauge its impact on pupils' achievement. The use of assessment information is good and allows staff to identify areas of underachievement and put in strategies to prevent pupils lagging behind. While recognising success is to be celebrated, the school's self-evaluation is too generous and not an accurate picture of where it stands. Day-to-day management, especially in relation to records, is not sufficiently up to date concerning safeguarding and risk assessments.

The school improvement plan has clearly aimed targets at raising achievement in literacy, numeracy and science. However, in numeracy there are no costings or indications of how the school will judge the success of its actions to improve this aspect. The school works effectively within the community, with especially strong links with the children's centre. It has effective links with local schools and colleges to promote sport and the arts. Links with the wider United Kingdom are not as strongly developed, which limits pupils' cultural awareness.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 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?	3

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

22 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martin's Garden Primary School, Bath BA2 2UN

Thank you very much for giving us a very warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, especially the school council and the group from Year 6 who gave up part of lunchtime to meet us. I am pleased to tell you that your school is much better than a year ago and that it is now a satisfactory and improving school. You and all adults in the school have helped make it better through:

- working much harder so that you make satisfactory progress and now do as well in English, mathematics and science as most children of your age
- behaving very well in lessons and being very keen to ask and answer questions
- enjoying your lessons which you think are 'fun'
- taking part enthusiastically in after-school clubs and local festivals
- understanding your targets and working hard to achieve them
- supporting all the adults who are working hard to improve your education.

There are still some important things that we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do so that your school continues to get better. These are to:

-
- make sure that when planning your work, teachers expect all of you to work as hard as you can
- give those of you in the EYFS more time to learn outdoors and more time on knowledge and understanding of the world
- make sure that all the important records the government expects your school to have in place are kept up to date
- make reading corners more exciting to encourage you to really enjoy reading.

We know that you will continue to work hard and enjoy school.

Yours faithfully

David Curtis

Lead inspector