

William Martin Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School, Harlow

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115100
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338511
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Albert Watson
Headteacher	Peter Wilton
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2006
School address	Tawneys Road Harlow Essex
Telephone number	01279 424120
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around half the time that pupils were in lessons observing learning. Inspectors visited 19 lessons and observed 11 teachers and teaching assistants leading learning. This included several joint observations with the headteacher and with each of the members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They looked at samples of pupils' work, analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring, the school development plan, risk assessments, reports written by governors and the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 96 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- current standards and rates of progress in lessons, especially among pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of measures taken across the curriculum to accelerate pupils' progress in writing.

Information about the school

In this average sized school, the great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. William Martin Junior School has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In its prospectus, governors describe one of the school's key aims, 'To provide an enriching, stimulating, caring and motivating environment which encourages imagination, inquisitiveness and originality'. What makes William Martin Junior such a good school is the admirable way it achieves this aim.

The headteacher, school leaders, staff and governors have a very accurate picture of the school. They work cohesively as a team with a shared drive and demonstrable capacity for continued improvement. This can be seen especially clearly in the way the curriculum has been developed since the last inspection report. A curriculum previously described as too narrowly focused on literacy and numeracy is now among the key strengths of the school. Stimulating cross-curricular activities have created an exciting learning environment which is increasingly motivating pupils to try hard and succeed in what they do.

Attainment is above average, not just in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science, but also in other subjects. There are high standards in art, and in the pupils' singing and performance skills. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because of their enthusiasm for learning. In building this zeal, the school draws well on its partnerships with outside agencies. For example, input from a specialist from the Royal Opera House has led to work in each class on masks, linked to a focus throughout the school on storytelling and myths. This, in turn, has contributed to the pupils' confident speaking skills. This is a strong prelude to the opportunities planned for extending pupils' writing, which lags behind their other key skills. Although pupils are now champing at the bit to write, the creative writing that is planned for is not yet underway because lessons are still focusing on preparatory work. Topics and subjects such as history contribute to pupils' improving writing skills, but opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to apply and develop their writing. This happens on those occasions when they are given unchallenging worksheets to complete or when pupils of widely different abilities are given similar templates for recording their work. Teachers' marking helps pupils by pointing out how their written work can be improved. Pupils also have individual targets, although not all know and routinely refer to them.

Pupils get on well with each other and with their teachers and the other adults in the school. They work hard because they like and are eager to please the staff. The teachers' enthusiasm also helps to engage and motivate the pupils. For example, teachers' animated recounting of various stories and myths during the inspection had pupils spellbound. Spoken language is not always modelled quite so well, however, because, on some occasions, adults do not distinguish sufficiently between standard

English and colloquial English or local dialect.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they listen well to their teachers. They feel very safe at school because of the excellent arrangements for their welfare. This is something especially appreciated by parents. As one parent explained, 'The staff know each child individually and are at hand to help with any problems that may arise.' A parent whose son joined the school partway through Key Stage 2 described how, 'This school has gone out of their way to help him settle and catch up.' Another very satisfied parent summed up the views of many in voicing appreciation of the progress her daughter had made at the school: 'I feel that they ensure that she develops to her full potential.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the start of the autumn term 2010, accelerate pupils' progress in writing by
 - developing pupils' activities on oral storytelling and myths so that pupils' written work is of a similarly high standard
 - giving pupils more opportunities to record work in their own way
 - reducing the reliance in some classes on unchallenging worksheets
 - ensuring that all pupils know and refer to their individual writing targets
 - clearly distinguishing standard English from colloquial English and local dialect.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Lessons, and pupils' work, show that attainment is above average. Standards are generally better in mathematics and science than in English because of the relative weakness of pupils' writing. There are signs from pupils' work that initiatives to better promote writing are beginning to bear fruit. In all subjects, pupils of all abilities make good progress from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6. Although in previous years, some of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made slower progress than others, that is no longer the case. Well-targeted additional support helps these pupils to achieve well. Pupils' excellent behaviour and their very positive attitudes to learning contribute strongly to their academic success. Absence rates are below average, another improvement since the last inspection, because pupils enjoy school and the exciting activities they are given to do and because of the vigorous competition to win certificates for the best attendance. As one parent mused, 'My child would live at the school if it were possible!'

A striking feature of this school is the pupils' mature approach to the many responsibilities they take on, including as school councillors. These go beyond the school gate to the keen interest pupils take in the local environment and in the wider world. They have raised considerable funds for an impressive array of local, national and international charities. In response to the Haitian earthquake, for example, the school council organised a range of activities that raised more than £850. Pupils follow closely developments at a school in Malawi with which they are twinned. This includes

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

exchanging letters with their African pen pals.

Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and a great many supplement their physical education lessons by taking part in the various after-school sporting clubs on offer. They do not all choose to eat healthy snacks, however, and school leaders and governors have agreed to introduce a more rigorous healthy eating policy to improve this.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their pupils well and they mostly plan lessons with varied activities that move pupils' learning on at a brisk pace. They manage their classes well, so that pupils understand what is expected of them. In turn, the pupils listen and behave well, although, especially in the younger classes, they do not all produce as much written work as they should when they are asked to work independently. Sometimes an overreliance on unchallenging worksheets or overly prescriptive templates for recording answers limit opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their writing skills.

A notable feature of teaching at William Martin Junior is teachers' use of information and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

communication technology. Interactive whiteboards and visualisers, which project images of books and objects onto a screen, are used imaginatively throughout the school to help enliven lessons. Learning is also enriched through the creative links made between different subjects and productive partnerships with other schools and outside agencies. These contribute regularly to sports and physical education, as well as to special events like the stunning mosaics which celebrate religious themes and the school's recent fiftieth anniversary. Pupils' work is marked regularly, and mostly with comments that help to move the pupils' learning on. Pupils each have individual targets but they are not as effective as they could be in focusing them on what they need to do to improve because the pupils are often not conscious of what their targets are.

Tracking of pupils' progress is especially thorough at this school because it is not limited to just the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. There is tracking throughout the school in every National Curriculum subject. The comprehensive arrangements for pupils' welfare are greatly appreciated by pupils and parents alike. These contribute to pupils' feeling of safety, and to their very good knowledge of how to keep safe. In this, the school again draws well on its partnerships with outside agencies. A local authority initiative, 'Crucial Crew', brings together experts from the emergency services and National Health Service to help educate Year 6 pupils on perils to avoid.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Much of the success of this school is down to the very effective teamwork of the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors. This has helped to create not just the 'warm and friendly atmosphere' which parents describe, but a school where the expectations of pupils are consistent. The feedback given to teachers from leaders' observations of lessons has led to this high degree of consistency, even though monitoring has tended to focus on the features of teaching rather than on the progress that pupils are making in the lesson.

Governors have developed their role greatly since the last inspection. Through their regular visits and the reports they write to follow these up, they have their own view of the school and are not just dependent on the headteacher and staff for their picture of how well the school is doing. They have been forward-thinking in developing contingency plans to ensure continuity following the headteacher's impending retirement. Together with leaders and staff, they ensure that all legal requirements are

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

in place for pupils' safeguarding, although they have not formally evaluated the impact of the wide-ranging work done by the school to promote community cohesion. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Boys and girls are helped to make equally good progress, and the school has been successful in identifying and addressing pockets of previous underachievement so that, for example, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities now do just as well as their peers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are pleased with the way in which the school provides for their children. They especially praise the school's caring ethos which helps their children to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Some parents voice concerns about behaviour, but inspectors saw excellent behaviour in almost every class.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Martin Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School, Harlow to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 96 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 234 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	55	36	38	4	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	64	34	35	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	42	50	52	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	51	40	42	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	56	38	40	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	44	44	46	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	41	50	52	4	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	41	50	52	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	47	47	49	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	40	45	47	7	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	38	52	54	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	49	45	47	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	60	35	36	2	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of William Martin Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School,
Harlow, CM18 6PN

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we came to visit you. Yours is a good school where the good teaching helps you to make good progress. We were very pleased at how very well behaved you are, and how you all get on so well together. It is this that helps to make the school such a happy place to be. In this well run school, staff take excellent care of you, which is a key reason why you feel so safe at William Martin Junior. We could see that you also learn for yourselves how to keep safe, especially through the 'Crucial Crew' activities in Year 6.

Writing has lagged behind the standard of your other work, and we were pleased to see that that is beginning to improve thanks to some of the recent changes. You are obviously all enjoying the work you have been doing on masks, myths and storytelling, and many of you are keen now to move from telling tales of your own to writing them down. We agree that you should now be encouraged to put pen to paper to build on this exciting work. We have also asked your teachers to give you more opportunities to apply your writing and literacy skills by recording work in your own way and to make sure that you do not have too many worksheets to fill in. Like many places, Harlow has its own local dialect, but you need to be able to distinguish this from more formal 'standard English', particularly when you are writing. We have asked teachers and support staff to take especial care to give you examples of this. You can also help to improve your writing and other work further by making sure that you know and always refer to your targets. These will help you to make even faster progress.

Thank you again for looking after us on our visit. You have our very best wishes for your continued success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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