

St Martin's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116685
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338867
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Hardwicke
Headteacher	Euan McGilp
Date of previous school inspection	4 September 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner. They observed the school's work and looked at the safeguarding documentation, improvement plans, progress reports, governors' minutes and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors also analysed 51 parental questionnaires and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- the impact of recent initiatives to raise standards in English, mathematics and science
- the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress
- the quality of marking in determining pupils' next steps in learning
- the rigour of the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Information about the school

This is one of the largest primary schools in Herefordshire. It is situated in the South Wye area of Hereford. When last inspected in 2008 the school was given a notice to improve as it was judged to be performing significantly less well than might have been expected. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is delivered through the Nursery and Reception classes. The school also runs a pre-school breakfast club and an after-school club. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average and the proportion with learning difficulties is well above average and a small number have disabilities. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school has achieved the Active Mark Gold and Healthy School Award.

Additional on-site childcare facilities are managed by a private company and are inspected separately.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school where the headteacher and staff work hard to drive improvement. A very large majority of parents are pleased with the quality of education it provides and hold it in high regard. Although attainment remains low overall it is increasing rapidly, particularly towards the end of Key Stage 2 where results are now close to average. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The recent changes that have been introduced have increased the rate at which pupils learn. This is a direct result of management decisions that have focused on raising the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching has improved and although satisfactory overall the proportion of lessons that are good or better has increased. To improve the quality of teaching further the school's leaders are focused on ensuring greater consistency across the school and strengthening provision in Key Stage 1. Plans are also being implemented to ensure that pupils' skills, for example in handwriting and spelling, are developed consistently across each year group. Pupils benefit from better quality marking of their work which, in many cases, explains how it could be improved.

The school has a number of strengths. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well organised. Children settle quickly and begin to make good progress. Pupils enjoy school and told inspectors that they feel safe. Many enjoy participating in sport and exercise regularly, which helps keep them healthy.

The capacity of the school to improve further is now satisfactory. The leadership team is firmly focused on raising standards through better teaching and is looking to give greater attention to how it impacts on individuals and groups of pupils. Target setting is in place but, in some year groups, it is only moderately challenging. There is a clearer sense of direction to the school's work and most staff value this new, shared sense of purpose. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on effective analysis of a range of evidence gathered through the school's monitoring procedures. The leadership team has identified the need to improve pupils' punctuality and attendance further and is focusing on improving communications with parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue improving pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science to exceed the national average by:
 - increasing pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 1

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- strengthening the quality of teaching further so that it is consistently good across the school
- improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling.
- Improve pupils' punctuality and attendance to at least 95% by working closely with all involved and raising families' awareness about how they impact on pupils' future life chances.
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management by:
 - monitoring with greater precision how the quality of teaching impacts on pupils' learning
 - ensuring that target setting is both realistic and challenging
 - strengthening communication links with parents and carers.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to do well. In the lessons observed they showed positive attitudes and worked diligently to achieve their learning objectives. They make broadly satisfactory progress across Key Stage 1 from their low starting points. As a result, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is currently low. Pupils are making faster progress across Key Stage 2 and attainment, at the end of Year 6, has risen quickly over the past two years. It is currently in line with the national average for English but just below for mathematics and science. This rapidly improving picture has come about because of the school's success in raising the quality and consistency of teaching. The support given to pupils requiring greater challenge and extension and to those requiring additional help has been targeted well, resulting in these pupils making faster progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with strengths in moral and social development.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory across the school. They are polite and show good manners. The introduction of 'golden time' has been an effective initiative that has helped pupils focus on the importance of good behaviour. Teachers and support staff respond quickly to resolve any issues arising and pupils say that they feel safe and cared for. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities. This year, because the number of Year 6 pupils wanting to work as peer supporters had increased, they had to write a letter of application for consideration before being appointed. Those appointed enjoy providing support to others around the school during break times.

As a result of the improvements to pupils' attainment they are prepared appropriately for the transfer to secondary school. Pupils' attendance levels are improving rapidly but they are still low. Pupils' punctuality is also a cause for concern as lessons at the start of the day are frequently interrupted by late arrivals.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, is improving and in some respects is good. Teachers have achieved a great deal in strengthening their practice but there are still inconsistencies between the different key stages. They have accepted and acted on advice and guidance, often to good effect. As a result, lesson planning has improved and is now detailed and comprehensive. Plans include appropriate objectives for the lesson and relevant instructions for support staff which help teaching assistants to support pupils well. Teachers are increasingly making their expectations clear about what they want pupils to achieve. They maintain a suitable pace to lessons but they give less emphasis to their expectations about the presentation of pupils' work. Consequently, the quality of some pupils' handwriting and the accuracy of their spelling are lower than might be expected.

Teachers are increasingly using assessment data well to plan work at the appropriate level for pupils' differing abilities. The quality of data being used is improving as teachers' expertise develops in assessing pupils' development. The quality of marking is also showing improvement as teachers provide guidance to individuals about how to

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

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improve their work. On occasion, teachers' handwriting or choice of vocabulary makes it difficult for pupils to understand and learn from what has been written.

The curriculum is planned appropriately to meet the needs of pupils. It is satisfactory overall but a number of relatively new initiatives have been introduced, including 'big writing', which is supporting pupils' writing development. However, although it is too early to quantify any discernible impact on pupils' attainment, the approaches are well thought out. The curriculum has been adapted well to accommodate the needs of pupils with specific learning and social needs. Pupils value the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, some of which are run by parent volunteers, and almost a third attend at least one club during each year.

The overwhelming majority of pupils feel safe at school. Relationships are secure across the school and the quality of pastoral care is effective in meeting pupils' needs. Staff are informed about and aware of vulnerable pupils' needs and take care to ensure that they receive appropriate support. The pre-school breakfast club and the after-school club contribute well to pupils' development. Pupils enjoy the social occasion of having breakfast together and having access to a good range of resources both before and after school. The leadership team is working hard to ensure that parents and carers recognise their responsibility for improving pupils' punctuality and attendance, and they are beginning to achieve some encouraging results.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The recent changes to the school's leadership team have improved and strengthened the school's capacity to improve. The decision to include the phase leaders and subject coordinators into the leadership team has increased the pace of change and brought about a greater sense of accountability. Morale across the school is good and there is a strong desire to achieve further improvement. The monitoring procedures are used well to identify the school's successes and areas where further development is needed. The quality of feedback following lesson observations is detailed and comprehensive. It provides useful information about the effectiveness of different aspects of the teaching observed but does not focus explicitly on how the teaching has impacted on the progress achieved by individuals or groups of pupils.

Target setting is based on increasingly accurate assessment information, but it is only moderately challenging. The governing body has gone through a recent reorganisation

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of responsibilities following a change of leadership and new appointments. It has wisely decided to allocate mentors to newly appointed governors as a means of providing support as they establish themselves. Governors are developing their expertise at being able to fully hold the school to account and challenge the leadership about the progress being achieved on improvement priorities.

Relationships with most groups of parents and carers are positive. The school regularly seeks their views and acts on the results. The ongoing development of the school's website demonstrates the commitment to working closely with parents and carers by sharing information that can benefit pupils' development. The school's work to promote equal opportunities is proving successful. Staff monitor how well pupils get on together and, on the few occasions when incidents do arise, take action to resolve matters successfully. The school is well aware of the local community that it serves. Actions are being taken to strengthen community cohesion but these developments are too recent to be able to evaluate their impact. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and ensure that pupils are protected.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge that are below those expected. Their language and numeracy skills are often well below what might be typical of children of this age. However, the Early Years Foundation Stage team is skilled at helping children adjust to the school's routines and begin to make progress. Children are happy to come to school because they feel safe and they enjoy learning. They make good progress and begin to make up ground so that by the end of the Reception Year

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most are doing well, even though their attainment is still low. Relationships are positive. Children follow safety, health and care routines well and play and learn together enthusiastically. The classrooms are organised and planned well to provide a good learning environment in which children want to learn. The different activities are tailored carefully to ensure that children experience a well-structured learning programme. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because the staff work well together as a team, monitoring and recording children's development, and use this information well in planning children's future learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

While relatively few parents and carers returned questionnaires, most of those that did were positive about their child's experience at St Martin's Primary School. They were unanimous that the school keeps pupils safe and the overwhelming majority say that their child is prepared well for the future. Some wrote about how the change of classes at the start of the year had been managed effectively, which had helped children make a prompt start in their new class. A few say that children do not make enough progress and that not enough teaching is good. The inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching has improved and, although it is satisfactory overall, some aspects are good and a few outstanding. Inspectors agree that pupils can make more progress and they have asked the school to increase the rate at which children learn, particularly in Key Stage 1. A very small minority also say that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that the school is not led and managed effectively. The inspectors investigated both of these views and conclude that they may well be based on historical experiences. However, the inspectors have recommended that the school's leadership continues to improve the quality and effectiveness of its communications with parents and carers. The school is well placed in this respect as they will shortly be launching their new website. With regard to management of pupils' behaviour the school has introduced various initiatives that have helped pupils engage willingly in classes and play together safely outside.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Martin's Primary School 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 327 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	51	23	45	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	55	23	45	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	39	26	51	4	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	41	24	47	5	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	23	45	23	45	4	8	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	39	27	53	3	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	43	25	49	3	6	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)	17	33	32	63	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	39	24	47	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	37	22	43	7	14	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	33	25	49	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	17	33	25	49	6	12	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	39	27	53	3	6	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Martin's Primary School, Hereford, HR2 6AF

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to find out about your school. Thank you to everyone who also completed questionnaires; these provided us with a great deal of information about your views. It is clear that you go to a friendly and welcoming school. It provides you with a satisfactory education and it has some good features, which you enjoy.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

Children starting in Nursery and Reception settle quickly and make good progress.

You enjoy school, feel safe and want to do your best.

You find lessons interesting which helps you to make progress.

Many of you enjoy the after school activities.

You enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school.

You like 'golden time' and are really pleased when it is granted.

Although the school has improved recently we have suggested the following ways the school could do even better.

First of all, we have asked the teachers to help you to learn more in English, mathematics and science lessons.

Secondly, we want your families to help you get to school on time and to make sure that you only miss school if you are ill.

Last of all, we have asked the school leaders to do even more to make sure that teaching really challenges you to do your best.

We have taken away many good memories of your school and hope that you achieve all your ambitions that you told us about.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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