

William Martin CofE VC Infant and Nursery School, Harlow

Tawneys Road, Harlow, Essex CM18 6PN

Inspection dates

5–6 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders, including the governors, have ambition to continually improve the school. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good across the school. Teachers know their pupils well. They plan interesting lessons that engage pupils in their learning.
- Early years provision is good. Good teaching and imaginative learning activities ensure that children make good progress.
- Teaching assistants give effective support to pupils who need extra help so that these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils behave well, are enthusiastic learners and show respect for adults and one another.
- Pupils say, and their parents overwhelmingly agree, that they feel safe and happy in school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is very well developed through the subjects, the school's ethos and the range of visits and after-school activities.
- This is an inclusive school where every pupil is valued and supported to achieve as well as they can. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are thriving as a result of the support they receive.
- Pupils' progress is improving across a range of subjects. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved since the previous inspection. However, progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics as pupils are not always given enough opportunities to practise their writing.
- Although middle leaders monitor the work within their areas well, which has helped raise standards, they do not fully check the impact this work has on how well groups of pupils are doing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing across the curriculum.
- Further develop the impact of middle leaders on raising attainment by ensuring that they evaluate the impact of their actions on the progress of different groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, governors and senior staff are united in their ambition to improve the school. They have a clear vision for the school and are determined to provide high-quality teaching in a safe, nurturing environment where each pupil can achieve their best. Staff fully support senior leaders.
- Senior leaders have successfully addressed the issues from the previous inspection. Under the leadership of the headteacher, senior staff work closely with colleagues from the on-site junior school. Staff work together to share their expertise and to moderate work. This joint working ensures continuity of provision as pupils move from key stage 1 into key stage 2.
- Processes to monitor the quality of teaching are robust and senior leaders use a variety of information to judge teaching. Processes to manage teachers' performance are rigorous. Teachers are set challenging pupils' progress targets, and senior leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate high-quality training to improve their skills. Teachers are appreciative of the training they receive. Teachers new to the profession told inspectors they feel well supported to improve their teaching. The school is fully staffed.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils, ensuring that they have the same opportunities as their classmates. Eligible pupils receive extra help with their learning and financial support so that they can attend visits and trips. The resulting impact is that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher's evaluation of the school's performance is accurate and improvement plans are focused on the right priorities. She has identified where support from outside the school is needed and has successfully used external advisers to support school improvement – for example, to support teachers in the early years setting when the leader was on maternity leave.
- Middle leaders have introduced well thought out strategies to improve achievement in their subject areas. They rigorously monitor standards of teaching and the progress of pupils, and have accurately identified areas for improvement. However, in order to make informed decisions about the most effective strategies, middle leaders need to evaluate the impact on the progress of different groups of pupils.
- The school has made good use of the primary sports funding to provide high-quality sports teaching. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a range of sports such as cricket, dance, basketball and hockey. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Subjects are studied through a range of stimulating topics, for example 'castles and dragons' and 'meerkat mail'. Practical learning activities or visits are built into each topic and make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum also supports pupils' personal development. Through subjects such as religious education and philosophy, they have the opportunity to consider and discuss issues such as respect for the environment and personal responsibility. Pupils study different religions and reflect on their similarities and differences.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors are committed to continuing to improve the school. They understand their duties and provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support for senior leaders.
- Individual governors have specific roles, including being linked to subject areas. This enables them to keep informed of the impact of actions identified in the school development plan. Evidence from governors' meetings indicates that they ask searching questions and hold senior leaders to account. The chair of the governing body meets weekly with the headteacher to discuss provision for the pupils. They do not get involved in the day-to-day running of the school.
- The governors have a good understanding of pupils' progress and areas of strength and weakness in pupils' attainment. They closely monitor the impact of the sports and pupil premium funding on pupils' outcomes.
- Governors are committed to ensuring that relationships between parents and the school are positive. They work with the inclusion manager running workshops for parents and their children. Parents therefore have the opportunity to talk to governors first-hand.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is given the highest priority by senior leaders, governors and staff. All the appropriate checks are carried out on all staff who work with children. The identity of visitors is carefully checked and they are provided with appropriate safeguarding information.
- All staff, including members of the governing body, are trained according to the latest guidance, including the risks of radicalisation, extremism and child sexual exploitation. Staff know how to identify possible indicators of abuse and are vigilant at all times. Procedures for reporting concerns are quickly implemented and, where necessary, referrals are quickly made to the relevant agencies. Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns if they do not feel that the response of agencies is appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use, together with their knowledge of the pupils, to develop challenging and interesting activities. Teachers encourage all pupils to do their best through praise and rewards. As a result, pupils are keen to learn and succeed. Pupils work well together and help one another with their work.
- Pupils understand and follow the classroom expectations. Pupils are eager to ask and answer questions and understand that they learn from their mistakes. Adults are very quick to address errors that pupils make. All pupils also take the utmost care with the presentation of their work.
- Teaching assistants are clear about their role and the learning outcomes for pupils because teachers provide them with clear plans. They are well trained and have the skills to successfully support the pupils they work with, including those with more complex learning needs.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning to successfully check pupils' learning. Pupils receive either additional support or are moved on to the next task depending on their understanding. Questions are also used effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and develop their reasoning skills. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these challenging questions, especially the most able.
- In lessons pupils are provided with different levels of learning challenges, ranging from 'mild chilli' to 'super-hot chilli'. All pupils are encouraged to attempt the harder challenges. The most able pupils are directed towards the harder challenges by teachers ensuring that no learning time is wasted completing work they find easy.
- Phonics is well taught. Teachers clearly pronounce the letter sounds and are quick to identify the mispronunciations by the pupils. For example, in one lesson pupils were finding it hard not to pronounce the 'th' sound as 'f'. The teacher taught them how to 'stick their tongue out' to make the correct sound. They enjoyed the activity and quickly mastered the correct sound.
- In mathematics pupils are taught to use a range of equipment such as number squares and counters to help them solve calculations. This develops their confidence when attempting new or harder number problems.
- Pupils are immersed in a reading culture from the early years. Teachers read stories that capture pupils' interest and they have access to a range of story and non-fiction books. Pupils have the opportunity to practise their writing skills across the curriculum but teachers do not always make the most of the opportunities for pupils to practise writing for different purposes.
- Homework is set regularly and is focused on literacy and numeracy development. Parents agree that homework is appropriate and the overwhelming majority agree that teaching is good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. If bullying should occur or if pupils are upset, they have confidence in staff to help them. The overwhelming majority of parents who expressed an opinion agree that their child is safe, happy and well looked after in school. Parents also have confidence in the school dealing with bullying.
- There is a strong culture of care for pupils and support for their families. The inclusion manager supports the broader needs of many families. She works closely with the special educational needs coordinator and together they work with a range of organisations that can further support the pupils and their families. Parents value this support and this comment sums up the feelings of several parents: 'They have been brilliant. The school has helped me with strategies to support my child.'
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They are knowledgeable about internet safety and know what to do if something troubles them when using the internet.

- The school is fully inclusive and the key values of the school and its ethos encourage pupils to value themselves and others from all cultures. Philosophy lessons give pupils the opportunity to understand feelings and how they impact on behaviour. Assemblies provide the opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own beliefs.
- Several parents described the school as 'a happy and caring environment and children love coming to school'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons because they are keen to learn. They are proud of their work and the vast majority of pupils present their work carefully and neatly.
- At breaktime and lunchtime pupils play well together showing respect for one another and adults. They quickly return to their lessons ready to learn.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and are excellent role models for pupils. Adults listen to pupils and treat them with respect and kindness. As a result, pupils are confident learners who are keen to ask and answer questions.
- Teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently. The emphasis is on rewarding good behaviour and because pupils enjoy receiving praise and value the rewards, they behave well. Pupils told the inspectors that moving up the rewards ladder makes them work harder.
- Pupils are taught from Nursery what is acceptable behaviour and are very well supported by adults to understand what is and is not appropriate. The very small number of pupils who require support with their behaviour receive individualised programmes. As a result, they very rarely disrupt lessons and are able to join in with all school activities. Behaviour records indicate that there are very few incidents of disruptive behaviour. Parents and pupils agree that behaviour is good.
- Attendance is in line with the national figure for primary schools. Pupils enjoy coming to school and as a result most attend well. School leaders carefully monitor pupils' attendance. They are quick to identify any pupil whose absence may be having an impact on their progress. The inclusion manager works closely with families to find solutions to improve attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved since the previous inspection. In 2016 the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the new, more challenging, national key stage 1 tests was above the national average in reading and writing and just below in mathematics. This represents good progress from individual pupils' starting points.

- Children get off to a brisk start in Nursery and Reception. Their starting points when they enter the school are often below those typically expected for their age. Language, communication, physical development and mathematics are areas where development is well below that typical for a large number of children. As a result of consistently good teaching, children make rapid and sometimes outstanding progress from their starting points. For the last three years the number of children reaching the expected level of development has been above average. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.
- In key stage 1 standards in reading are improving because phonics is taught well. Pupils use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils meeting the threshold in the national phonics screening check in 2016 is the highest achieved within the school. Pupils who struggle with their reading are given additional support and most catch up quickly. The most able readers read with fluency and expression. They are given challenging books to read and often go to the junior school for books when those in the infants become too easy.
- Almost all of the pupils who read to the inspectors were enthusiastic about reading and said, 'It helps us learn things.' They talked about the types of books they enjoyed and their reading records indicate that almost all read at home every evening.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. The special educational needs coordinator assesses the needs of the pupils well, and works with teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that support meets their individual needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national tests was above other pupils nationally in mathematics. In reading and writing, it was broadly average.
- There are only a small number of most-able pupils in the school. Work in pupils' books indicates that these pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. This is because they are given harder work which requires more of them. Parents commented positively on the level of challenge provided to extend their child's learning.
- Work in pupils' books and displays in the classrooms indicate that pupils are making good progress and achieving well in subjects such as art, history, religious education and science. Pupils are beginning to use their mathematical skills in other subjects and they write for a variety of purposes in subjects such as history. However, there are still occasions when pupils do not have enough opportunity to produce high-quality writing in these subjects.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils are well prepared for key stage 2.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years staff communicate well with parents before their child starts either Nursery or Reception, and throughout the year. Home visits, visits to other pre-school settings and meetings with parents all form part of the induction programme. 'Proud clouds' are sent home so that parents can share their success at home. Parents are welcome to view their child's work and talk to staff daily.

- Parents who spoke to the inspectors were complimentary about the start their child has made in the early years. This was summed up by this typical parent's comment: 'My child has settled in very quickly. It is due to the efforts of the staff, the school's policies and procedures.'
- Children settle quickly into Nursery and Reception because staff communicate well with parents prior to children starting at the school. Meeting with children in their home, in their pre-school setting and visits to the school allow staff to find out about the children. As a result, they plan learning activities that interest the children.
- Children learn in a bright, stimulating, safe and caring environment. Adults listen to the children and their language skills quickly improve because staff model the correct pronunciation of words. Activities are carefully matched to the skills of the children.
- Adults track the children's progress carefully. The early years leader quickly identifies and plans effective support for children who are struggling. Assessment of children's progress and attainment is accurate.
- Adults provide a range of activities that support children's language, curiosity, and social and physical development. For example, the children were learning about vegetables and enjoyed mixing them in the pot to make soup. Others were labelling cans with the names of vegetables for their shop, providing opportunities for the children to write. However, there are still occasions when activities do not provide as many opportunities for children to write as they do to read or use mathematics.
- The outside area is well equipped and used well, especially to support physical development. During the inspection adults made the most of windy conditions for children to make and fly kites. This excited the children and they talked to the inspectors about what made their kites fly and why some flew higher than others.
- Teaching assistants work well with the teachers. Daily discussions about children's progress and the next stage in their learning ensures that teaching assistants provide support that enables the children to make progress. Teaching assistants are skilled at asking children questions that extend their understanding.
- Children learn in a safe environment. Staff take good care of the children and supervise them carefully, while giving them the necessary freedom to learn. The early years indoor and outdoor areas are secure.
- Children are well behaved. Staff model the considerate and gentle behaviour expected of them. Adults show the children how to share, take turns, listen to others and follow instructions. Consequently, children are happy, cooperate with one another and work together.
- The early years leader provides effective leadership for her team. The Nursery and Reception staff work closely together and set the same high expectations across the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	115101
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10019596

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Pegram
Headteacher	Janet Matthews
Telephone number	01279 424 122
Website	www.williammartinschools.org.uk
Email address	admin@williammartin-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school with eight classes from Nursery to Year 2. There are two classes for each year group, including the early years foundation stage (Nursery and Reception). Children attend part-time in the two Nursery classes and full-time in Reception. The majority of children transfer from Nursery to the Reception.
- The school is part of a hard federation with the on-site junior school. The schools share the same headteacher, governing body and special educational needs coordinator but their finances are separate.
- A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disability, or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school runs a breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils. They also run Gateway Collect after-school club.
- The school is part of the Harlow Education Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 16 lessons and made four shorter visits to classes to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Senior leaders joined the inspectors for four of the observations. The inspectors also looked at the work in pupils' books in lessons and conducted a work scrutiny to look at pupils' progress in the last academic year. Inspectors visited one assembly.
- Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- The inspectors observed behaviour in classrooms and around the school at break and lunchtime. They spoke formally to one group of Year 2 pupils and held informal conversations with pupils in the playground and dining hall.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, inclusion manager and two members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke to the independent consultant working with the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school policies, safeguarding documents, pupils' progress and attendance information.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the end of the day and took note of their views. They also considered the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 16 free text responses. Results from the school's own parent survey were also considered by the inspectors.
- The inspectors considered the responses from three members of staff who completed the inspection survey.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lyn Beale

Ofsted Inspector

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