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27 November 2017

Mr Anthony Marsh
Executive Headteacher
St Martin's CofE (Aided) Junior School
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Dear Mr Marsh

Short inspection of St Martin's CofE (Aided) Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You know the school, the federation and your community well. You aspire for St Martin's Junior School to be outstanding. You are clear about what needs to improve to make it so, because you have a very secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You demonstrate ambition for all your pupils, stating, 'There is no ceiling.' You have a clear vision for the school. Your collaborative approach to leadership ensures that all staff share this vision. Staff feel valued and work effectively together to ensure that teaching is of consistently good quality across the school. You set high expectations for your staff and pupils, with one governor commenting, 'Our headteacher does not do average.'

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say lessons are fun. They display a strong work ethic. They collaborate well on tasks and support each other to improve their work. Pupils were keen to explain how mistakes can help them learn. They behave very well in class. The broad and balanced curriculum is enriched by many trips, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Many parents commented on how happy their children are at St Martin's Junior School, with one writing, 'I would recommend the school in a heartbeat.'

The previous inspection report highlighted several strengths, including pupils' achievement, the quality of support from teaching assistants, improvements to teaching and well-motivated pupils. You have maintained these strengths. At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the scientific skills and knowledge of

pupils, and to ensure that the most able were challenged, especially in mathematics. Leaders' work to address this has been effective. There is clear evidence in pupils' books that challenge is appropriately high in both mathematics and English. Science standards are high. However, you were rightly not satisfied with the end-of-key-stage-2 reading results in 2017. They declined compared with the previous year's results and were lower than assessments conducted by teachers.

Leaders have identified that there is still work to be done to improve the use of assessment information, so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. We agreed that, with the improved assessment system that has recently been introduced, there would be increased opportunities for governors to be more knowledgeable about the progress of different groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils. This should further support governors in holding leaders to account for pupils' results.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and day-to-day routines are secure. The site is secure and well maintained. Governors regularly check that the school's safeguarding processes are working well. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers are fully in place. These are recorded appropriately on the single central record. Safeguarding training is regular and the induction of new staff and volunteers is well planned. Staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities for keeping pupils safe very well. As a result, pupils are safe. Staff have created a very nurturing environment. As one parent commented, 'I think St Martin's is a great school in terms of the atmosphere, care of the children and its general ethos about values and looking after one another.'

Most pupils attend the school regularly. However, attendance figures for disadvantaged pupils have been below the national average for all pupils in primary schools in recent years. Leaders acknowledged that there is still work to do to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The pupils who spoke to me said they always feel safe in school and that they love their friendly school. They said that bullying is rare but when it does happen 'Teachers sort it out.' Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders have addressed the areas identified at the previous inspection. These included challenge for the most able pupils and the improvement of pupils' science skills and knowledge. The inspection also focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve pupils' writing and how leaders ensure strong progress in reading. I also evaluated the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Provisional performance information for 2017 indicates that a higher proportion of pupils reached and exceeded the expected level in mathematics than pupils did nationally. Most pupils currently in the school are making good progress in mathematics and their attainment is high. I observed pupils confidently applying their mathematical knowledge to real-life tasks, such as working with mileage charts. Pupils benefit from challenging tasks at the right level for their ability. Pupils told me that they feel challenged in their work and enjoy applying their mathematical knowledge in investigations. One pupil said, 'I like to push myself to my limits.'
- Your systematic approach to teaching scientific enquiry has raised standards in pupils' skills and knowledge in science. Pupils' work shows that they are mastering investigative and practical skills, coupled with a secure understanding of key concepts. Pupils are involved in fully planning, carrying out and evaluating investigations, often suggesting the focus of the investigation themselves. Pupils speak of how much they enjoy experimental investigations.
- Provisional performance information for 2017 indicates that key stage 2 pupils made progress in writing in line with national averages. These results were an improvement on pupils' progress in 2016 key stage 2 writing assessments, which was significantly below the national average. Leaders successfully improved writing by introducing a more comprehensive method of assessment. As a consequence, teaching now takes more account of pupils' starting points.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps pupils learn effectively. Pupils use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing exciting. They carefully assess their own writing and improve aspects of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Handwriting is of a high standard. There is clear evidence to show that pupils are now making steady progress in their writing in English and in a range of other subjects across the curriculum. However, leaders recognise that approaches to improve teachers' knowledge of pupils' starting points in reading, writing and mathematics are not yet fully developed.
- Leaders have responded swiftly to the disappointing reading results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Leaders have analysed the reasons for these outcomes, and made changes. There is now an increased focus on the teaching of specific skills which is having a positive impact on standards. For example, pupils in Year 5 articulately discussed the traits of characters from 'Great Expectations' by Charles Dickens, using the symbolism of hot and cold. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the types of books they like to read. They read regularly at home. Current assessment information indicates that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making strong progress in reading.
- Governors have successfully ensured that the school is fully integrated into the federation. However, they do not always use the information they have to hold leaders to account for the attendance and academic performance of different groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new assessment systems are fully embedded so that governors, leaders and teachers deepen their understanding of how well pupils are progressing from their starting points
- governors use their enhanced understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils when holding leaders to account
- attendance improves for disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the executive leadership team at several points during the day to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, speak to pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I considered 84 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the accompanying free-text comments. I spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day. Staff and pupils' responses to the online questionnaire were also considered. I looked at the school's safeguarding arrangements. I examined a range of documentation including: your evaluation of the school's effectiveness; improvement planning; published performance data; the school's website; and pupil premium information. I met with the science leader and, together, we scrutinised a range of pupils' science work.