

**St Martin's Primary School
Renton
West Dunbartonshire Council
21 February 2006**

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1. Background

St Martin's Primary School was inspected in November 2005 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board and a group of parents¹.

The inspection team also evaluated aspects of the school's progress in implementing national recommendations related to improving aspects of school meals provision.

St Martin's Primary School is a denominational school serving the village of Renton and the surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the roll was 67. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance had shown steady improvement, but was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Initiatives taken by staff to improve pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The work done by all staff to ensure high levels of pastoral care for pupils.
- Very courteous and well-behaved pupils.
- Well focused assistance for pupils with additional support needs.
- Senior managers' encouragement to parents to become more involved in their children's learning.
- The joint work of school and catering staff to improve and promote school lunches.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to all parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents and carers were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. The only issue raised by parents was related to the school's accommodation, with around one-quarter feeling that the school buildings were not kept in good order. Pupils were very positive about all aspects of the school. They said that they enjoyed school and felt well supported by staff, who expected them to work as hard as they could and praised them when they did well. Teachers and support staff were very happy with the school. All said that they enjoyed working in the school and felt that it was well led. A few support staff felt that they did not have enough opportunities to be involved in decision-making.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

Overall, the good curriculum was broad and balanced. Staff had made good use of additional time allocated to English language to raise pupils' attainment in reading and writing. Staff had identified the programme for listening and talking as a priority for development. The daily morning welcome, involving all pupils and staff, had a positive impact on the school's ethos and prepared pupils very well for learning. Staff gave very good attention to developing pupils' skills in citizenship. Led by P7, all pupils were developing skills in enterprise through activities related to the Christmas show. The effective use of visits and visitors helped to extend pupils' learning experiences. Pupils responded very well to the range of opportunities for involvement in musical and dramatic performances. At P6/7, pupils learning French showed good recall of simple vocabulary. While a visiting specialist teacher helped to provide pupils with a good range of experiences in physical education, insufficient time was allocated to this aspect. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning across the curriculum was not yet well established and the programme for developing pupils' ICT skills needed to be broadened. Work in health education needed to give more attention to developing pupils' understanding of healthy eating, to reflect the very good work done to improve the quality of food provision in the school. Teachers planned lessons and homework well and the overall quality of teaching was good. They gave clear instructions and explanations, but did not always share the intended outcomes of lessons with pupils, or discuss progress at the end of lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers used stimulating approaches to motivate pupils. More varied approaches to teaching in mathematics had helped to improve pupils' attainment. Teachers promoted pupils' self-esteem by responding positively to their answers, using praise effectively and providing some helpful oral feedback on pupils' work. They did not always extend questioning to challenge pupils and encourage them to think.

The quality of pupils' learning was good. Teachers made effective use of display to provide a stimulating environment and motivate pupils. Pupils listened attentively to their teachers, responded well in class and most worked conscientiously on tasks set.

When given the opportunity in practical activities, they worked well together in pairs or groups. At times, however, lessons were over-directed by teachers and pupils did not have enough opportunity to work together or to be independent in their learning. There was scope to increase further the level of challenge for pupils across the curriculum. The use of play activities to help the youngest pupils develop early learning skills was not fully developed.

Most pupils were making good progress in developing self-confidence and self-esteem. At P7, pupils were enthusiastic about the additional responsibilities they were given as the senior pupils of the school. These included being actively involved in considering pupils' suggestions and making decisions about the school through their membership of the pupil council. Pupils were learning to be responsible and effective citizens. They cared for each other well and helped to celebrate the achievements of fellow pupils. Their concern for others was also demonstrated through the school's success in fund-raising for charity. Pupils' skills in art and design and drama were developing well. At all stages, pupils were producing imaginative art work involving a range of techniques. Through a very good programme of supported study, as well as through the after-school club, pupils were developing their level of fitness and interest in sports activities. A high proportion of pupils attended the supported study sessions which focused on art, music and drama activities in preparation for the annual Christmas performance.

English language

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in English language was good. In recent years, the school had made steady progress in raising attainment in reading and writing. Overall attainment in these aspects was now very good. Most pupils at P3 and P7 achieved appropriate levels of attainment and, across the stages, a significant number exceeded these levels. Pupils receiving additional support for their learning were making steady progress. The school had yet to systematically develop and assess pupils' attainment in listening and talking. Most pupils listened attentively to teachers, but were less skilled when listening and asking questions in group discussion. They could express opinions clearly, but many had difficulty in structuring and sustaining personal talk. At all stages, pupils read fluently and accurately, often with good attention to expression. At P4 to P7, pupils could describe well the key features of a story, but their skills in reading for information were less well developed. From P1, pupils were learning to write for a range of purposes, including writing effectively about their own feelings and experiences. They now needed to apply these skills more widely across the curriculum. Pupils' knowledge about language, spelling and punctuation was very good.

Mathematics

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. The school had made very good progress in raising levels of attainment in recent years. Most pupils were achieving or exceeding national levels of attainment for their stage. Almost all pupils coped well with their coursework. They carried out written calculations neatly and accurately. Those experiencing difficulties with their learning in mathematics were receiving good support and making progress. Pupils were developing good skills in information handling, but their skills in using computers to handle data and produce graphs were limited. The youngest pupils were developing good early numeracy skills. They showed enthusiasm in learning about and discussing the relative weights of objects.

Throughout the school, pupils were developing good skills in mental calculation and most were able to carry out calculations with speed and accuracy. They were competent in working with money and time at appropriate levels. By P7, pupils' knowledge of shape and the features of angles was very good, and they were confident in estimating and measuring. They could use a range of strategies to solve problems. At the middle stages, pupils' skills in problem solving were less well developed.

5. How well are pupils supported?

The care and welfare of pupils was a major strength of the school. All staff displayed strong commitment to ensuring pupils' well-being. They knew pupils and their families well and were responsive to the social, emotional and physical needs of individuals. Appropriate procedures were in place to promote child protection, anti-bullying, positive behaviour and anti-racism. The school gave very good attention to developing healthy lifestyles through, for example, the healthy tuckshop, high quality, well-presented lunches and the varied after-school activities. Staff dealt well with any incidents involving health and safety. Pupils knew they could discuss concerns with staff, directly or through the simple complaints system. The programme for personal and social development gave pupils knowledge and skills to live well and safely. It took appropriate account of denominational guidance for dealing with sensitive matters. Pupils entering P1 and those transferring from P7 to secondary school were well supported.

Class teachers, assisted ably by promoted staff and a range of support staff, worked hard to meet the needs of individual pupils. They were particularly attentive to those experiencing difficulties with their learning. Teachers had taken some good steps to challenge high attaining pupils in aspects of English language and mathematics, but needed to extend these expectations to other areas of the curriculum. Good links with health personnel and psychological services ensured that the specific needs of individuals were addressed. The education authority's family support service worked closely with the school to promote effective home-school links. An early intervention specialist provided pupils at P1 to P4 with good support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The visiting network support teacher provided well-targeted help to individual pupils. She now needed to be deployed to operate more regularly alongside pupils in class and to have more regular discussions with teachers about pupils' next steps in learning. The depute headteacher co-ordinated support for pupils very well. She worked closely with other staff to identify pupils requiring support and draw up well-focused support plans for individuals. These plans contained very clear learning targets which were shared and discussed with parents. The school should review its arrangements for taking action to ensure additional input for pupils with significantly low attendance.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The quality of accommodation was good. Teaching areas were bright and spacious and the school had extensive outdoor play areas. Pupils' work was attractively displayed. Teachers had made good use of additional space within the building to create a number of well-resourced areas for learning. They should ensure that all of these available areas are equally well used. The interior of the building was kept very clean and appropriate arrangements for security were in place. Disabled access was limited to the ground floor of the building. The uneven surface of two of the external ramps was a potential hazard to pupils. Pupils' toilets required some upgrading. Roof leaks, exterior paintwork and inefficiencies in heating and ventilation also required attention.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>Staff and pupils were very proud of their school. The headteacher had worked very effectively with all staff to create a supportive environment in which all pupils felt valued, safe and secure. Relationships among staff and pupils were very good. Pupils were positive about the school. They were courteous and well behaved and showed consideration for others. Pupils helped to lead the morning welcome, which reinforced the supportive atmosphere for learning and prepared them for each day's activities. They responded well when teachers set high expectations for their work and appreciated when their achievements were recognised and shared with parents and other members of the community. Their aspirations for their own performance were not always high enough. Daily prayers, weekly assemblies and special services provided regular opportunities for pupils to worship together and promoted a community of faith. The promotion of equality of opportunity, racial equality and a sense of fairness was strong.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	<p>The headteacher worked very hard to involve parents in the school's work. She encouraged parents to visit the school and provided very helpful information through newsletters, a wide range of leaflets, curriculum evenings and workshops. The headteacher surveyed parents' views annually and used the school's newsletter to give feedback. She ensured that parents were consulted about programmes and resources for sensitive health issues. Working in partnership with catering staff, the school had provided parents with a range of helpful information about school lunches and also opportunities to sample the menus. Parents met staff twice each year and received good information about their children's progress. Written reports did not always provide enough detail about planned next steps in pupils' learning. The school had close links with its chaplain and local church. It received good support from members of its School Board. School performances and other key events were well supported by parents and the wider community. The school had very productive links with the associated secondary school and primary schools.</p>

7. Improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

St Martin's Primary School provided a very caring environment in which pupils received very good support for their learning. The overall quality of learning and teaching was good and staff had been successful in raising pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils were progressing well in their personal and social development and showed care and consideration for others. Through a range of activities, they were developing good skills in art and design and benefiting from participation in school drama productions. There was scope to improve pupils' attainment further by giving pupils more opportunities to work together and also to be independent in their learning. The school was well placed to take forward its priorities for improvement.

Leadership of the school was very good. The headteacher and depute headteacher worked closely on key aspects of the school's work and formed a very effective team. The headteacher showed strong commitment to pupils' education, personal development and well-being. She provided clear direction for the school's work and for the organisation of day-to-day activities. In her role as support for learning co-ordinator, the depute headteacher made a significant contribution to ensuring that pupils' needs were being well met. She was very effective in carrying out all aspects of her remit. A range of approaches, including annual surveys of parents and pupils, had been put in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The headteacher and

depute evaluated teachers' forward plans and sampled pupils' work. Regular meetings between senior staff and class teachers had helped to increase the pace of learning and improve pupils' attainment in aspects of English language and mathematics. The programme of classroom observations could now usefully be extended to identify and share good practice in taking forward the school's priorities for further improvement in the quality of learning and teaching.

Main points for action

The school and the education authority should take action to improve aspects of learning and teaching and attainment. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- improve pupils' attainment in listening and talking;
- increase opportunities for pupils to be active in their learning and to become more independent learners, including through use of information and communications technology; and
- further increase the level of challenge for pupils, particularly high-attaining pupils, across the curriculum.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Marjory Robertson
HM Inspector

21 February 2006

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	Good
The teaching process	Good
Pupils' learning experiences	Good
Pupils' attainment in English language	Good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	Very good

How well are pupils supported?	
Pastoral care	Very good
Meeting pupils' needs	Very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Accommodation and facilities	Good
Climate and relationships	Very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	Good
Equality and fairness	Very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	Very good

Improving the school	
Leadership	Very good
Self-evaluation	Good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	excellent
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set high standards for attainment and provided stimulating and challenging work for their children.• Made it clear to parents the standards of work it expected from pupils.• Let parents know about their child's strengths and weaknesses, and consulted parents on decisions affecting their children.• Treated pupils fairly.• Attended to any matters of concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Around one-quarter of parents felt that the school buildings were not kept in good order.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explained things clearly and helped them when they had difficulties with classwork.• Expected them to work hard and told them when they had done something well.• Treated them fairly and helped them to feel safe and well looked after.• Helped them to keep safe and healthy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no significant issues.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked hard to promote good links with the community and told parents about the standards of work they expected from pupils. • Set high standards for pupils' attainment and gave them constructive feedback on their work. • Established mutual respect between teachers and pupils. • Showed concern for the care and welfare of pupils. • Discussed regularly how to achieve the school's priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few support staff felt that they did not have enough opportunity to be involved in decision-making.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education and Cultural Services, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Unit 7, Ground Floor Suite, Blair Court, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2LA or by telephoning 0141 435 3550. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

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