



ST MARTIN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Validation report

Validation dates: 19 November – 21 November 2013

Lead validator: Joyce Cox

Type of school: Maintained Primary

Age range of learners: 4 - 11

Gender of learners: Mixed

Number on roll: 486

Headteacher: Catherine Mason

Date of previous school validation: June 2009

School address: School Lane, St Martin's, Guernsey GY4 6HN

Telephone number: 01481 238707

Introduction

The validation was carried out by a team of three validators, who spent three days in the school observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work, engaging in discussions with staff and parents, looking at school records and other documentation, and scrutinising returns to the parents' questionnaire.

Description of the school

St Martin's is a very large primary school with a varied catchment area which includes owner occupied housing, rented accommodation and council estate housing. The majority of pupils have attended pre-school settings, including private and states-funded playgroups. The school has deemed 10% of pupils as having special educational needs. Most of those requiring additional support have social, emotional and behavioural needs or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. The school has a designated base for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties which is called the 'Nurture Room.'

A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children enter the school with a range of skills that are generally similar to those expected for their age but are often lower in their early writing and calculation skills.

Making judgements

The school and validators used a five-point scale to evaluate the school's performance. The scale is as follows.

1. Excellent
2. Well developed
3. Proficient
4. Less than proficient
5. Underdeveloped

Summary for parents

- Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are excellent. Pupils are exceptionally well motivated and hard working. They love learning, make excellent progress and attain high standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Their behaviour is exemplary at all times and they are very kind to each other. They are very proud of their school and their Guernsey heritage and develop into confident, responsible and reliable young people.
- Teaching and assessment are excellent. Lessons are very enjoyable and exciting and collaborative projects make learning fun and interesting. Consequently, all pupils have a real passion for learning. Validators endorse the school's intention to provide a greater range of new technology and applications for use in teaching and learning to improve pupils' ICT skills even further.
- The curriculum is excellent and ensures that learning is creative, interactive and enjoyable. It provides many opportunities for themed project work across subjects and for the pupils to demonstrate their developing skills.
- Care, guidance and support are excellent. Consequently pupils feel exceptionally safe and happy at school. The monitoring of learners' progress towards their academic targets is exceptionally thorough and regular.
- The school's self-evaluation is excellent. It is very accurate and involves all staff, parents and pupils. Senior leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning rigorously and regularly. All staff are exceptionally clear about the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher provides exceptional and inspired leadership. Her high aspirations for the school are shared by senior leaders, staff, and parents. Together, they are all totally dedicated to making sure that every pupil attains their potential and to ensuring that the school gets even better every year.
- The capacity to improve is excellent. All issues from the previous full and post validations have been fully addressed. Pupils' achievement has been improved so that they attain even higher standards at the end of Year 6. Plans for the future development of St Martin's are exceptionally clear and focussed on precisely the correct areas to improve.

Main area for school improvement

- Implement the plans to provide increased opportunities and hardware for pupils to apply their technology skills in all subjects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The validation was carried out by a team of three validators, who spent three days in the school observing lessons, talking with pupils and looking at their work, engaging in discussions with staff and parents, looking at school records and other documentation, and scrutinising returns to the parents' questionnaire.

Main findings

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff believe that every child at St Martin's can make great progress and that it is the school's role to ensure this happens. This belief results in a very happy community where pupils greatly enjoy their time at school, make excellent progress and attain high standards. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because they are very well cared for by all staff and very well treated by their classmates. Teaching and the curriculum are excellent. In order to enhance learning further, the use of ICT needs development and feedback in some Key Stage 2 mathematics books could be more diagnostic.

The school is exceptionally well led and all staff have very high expectations of themselves and their pupils. The great majority of parents expressed very positive opinions about the school. The school's meticulous review of its work has resulted in excellent priorities and planning for further improvement and the school demonstrates an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Outcomes for learners

The pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance, excellent behaviour and attitudes around the school and in lessons. Children make good progress in Reception and by the end of Year 6 achieve standards that are well above the island's averages, notably in the proportions who reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. This represents excellent progress in their academic skills and knowledge during their time in school. Pupils grow in self-confidence, develop a very strong sense of responsibility and make an excellent contribution to their school and local community. They show exceptional kindness towards others.

The quality of provision

Virtually all the teaching is well developed in the school and a third of all lessons seen during the validation were excellent. Classroom relationships are excellent and form a highly effective basis for pupils' learning. Lessons are very interesting and have a clear sense of direction. All pupils have an excellent understanding of their targets and can explain how they can improve, although marking could occasionally be more helpful and regular in some Key Stage 2 mathematics books. Learning is mostly through a perfect blend of presentation by the teacher followed by collaborative teamwork in pairs or in groups. The pupils have

good opportunities to use technology, which they find very motivating, but validators agree with senior leaders that more up to date ICT equipment is required.

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned and provides pupils with many memorable learning experiences. It provides pupils with an excellent rounded education that prepares them very well for future learning and life. Work in class is supplemented by an excellent programme of activities and clubs that contribute much to pupils' personal and social development.

The staff ensure that pupils are exceptionally well cared for and consequently pupils show considerable care and concern for others. The school is diligent in following all agreed procedures to ensure the welfare and safety of the pupils. Reception children receive exceptionally good support when they enter the school and highly effective systems are in place for Year 6 pupils' move to secondary schools. Very thorough ongoing assessment gives teachers and school leaders precise information about individual pupils' rates of progress, gaps in their knowledge and understanding and any barriers to learning that may exist. Senior leaders meet with teachers four times a year to discuss each pupil's progress and identify ways to support those who may need extra help.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has provided outstanding and inspirational leadership over a considerable period of time, as manifested in the two previous successful full and post validations. The deputy head teacher and assistant head teacher are excellent classroom practitioners who have high expectations and who set high standards for other teachers to follow.

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff form an exceptionally strong team whose distinct areas of expertise combine seamlessly to make this school highly successful. There is a tremendous team spirit in the school and all staff are extremely ambitious for their pupils and totally committed to continuous improvement. Many teachers have leadership roles and have been provided with carefully selected training to enable them to fulfil these effectively. Professional targets for improvement are robust and have been very effective in helping teachers to develop their skills so that the provision is of the highest quality. Monitoring of teaching is regular and rigorous and all teachers are accountable for the progress their classes make.

Self-evaluation is rigorous, systematic and accurate in determining what the school does well and where it could be improved further. The school's planning for improvement is excellent which provides everyone in the school with a coherent agenda for improvement and a very clear sense of direction. Consequently the school demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve even further.

Reception

Overall, children make good progress from their very varied starting points. Progress is excellent in personal and social development because staff give this very high priority when children start school, laying very effective foundations for future learning. The Reception leader provides very clear direction for the development of the provision, which has led to significant improvements, both in the quality of provision for Reception children and in their attainment and progress over the last three years.

Main area for school improvement

- Implement the plans to provide increased opportunities and hardware for pupils to apply their technology skills in all subjects.

The school and validators used a five-point scale to evaluate the school's performance. The scale is as follows.

1. Excellent
2. Well developed
3. Proficient
4. Less than proficient
5. Underdeveloped

FULL VALIDATION REPORT FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Outcomes for learners

Learners' enjoyment and achievement

This is a very happy and calm school where pupils behave exceptionally well, and develop into very polite, thoughtful, and considerate young people. All pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning, very hardworking and respond very positively to teachers' requests and instructions. The school gives its pupils a very strong sense of purpose, self-belief and, above all, a love of learning; as one of a group of pupils commented, 'I love this school because all my teachers are really kind and make lessons fun.' Their enjoyment and enthusiasm for school life is also reflected in their consistently above average levels of attendance. The successful implementation of the 'Kagan' approach to cooperative learning throughout the school has had an amazingly positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and has also greatly developed their independent investigative skills.

Children usually enter the school with a range of skills that are typical for children of that age. By the end of Reception, they attain levels that are above those expected for their age, having made good progress. They make excellent gains in their personal and social development as they experience a perfect balance of adult led and child selected learning. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress overall, although the school's tracking data shows that the current Year 2 pupils are on course to attain higher results, especially in terms of the proportion of pupils attaining Level 3. Standards over the past three years have been close to or slightly above the Guernsey average by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress accelerates as they move through the school so that by Year 6 they reach standards that are consistently and markedly above the Guernsey averages in all areas, notably for those reaching the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. This demonstrates excellent progress for all groups of learners from average starting points.

Pupils develop their capacity to be independent learners exceptionally well. Their very good grounding in literacy and numeracy is complemented by the many opportunities to develop their creative and problem-solving capabilities. Learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the effective levels of personal and academic guidance and the high quality teaching they experience. Information on more talented learners indicates that they achieve exceptionally well from their starting points.

Learners' personal development and well-being

St Martin's pupils are not only highly successful in their academic learning but are also confident, highly responsible and exceptionally effective contributors who work extremely well with each other. Pupils' confidence develops as soon as they enter the school because Reception children have many opportunities to try new learning experiences and to work in pairs and small groups. Year 1 and 2 pupils confidently attempt many challenges, such as researching new facts about planets in their exciting 'Discovery Zone.' As pupils progress through the school they display increasing self-confidence because they experience and enjoy collaborative learning in all subjects and because adults encourage them to 'have a go' and not to be afraid of making mistakes. For example, groups of Year 4 pupils took great delight in researching and describing various forms of Tudor crime and punishment. Pupils develop high levels of resourcefulness, as demonstrated in Year 6 pupils' very impressive power point presentations about life in Victorian times. One group skilfully wrote, acted and filmed 'Mrs Beaton's Bake Off' and a group of boys confidently shared their new knowledge about the very first FA cup match.

Pupils have considerable respect for each other, as demonstrated by their exemplary behaviour in lessons and in the playground. Virtually all the parents who completed the parents' questionnaire agreed that behaviour in the school is very good. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying in the school. Older pupils can identify potential hazards and assess risks to ensure everyone's safety. For example, Year 6 pupils carried out their own risk assessment before participating in a six mile cliff walk. Pupils are not only very proud of their school and their local heritage but also have an excellent understanding of Guernsey's place in the world. They develop this through topics such as comparing Kenya and Guernsey in Year 2, an India day in Year 3, researching other cultures in religious education and Year 6's 'Window on the world,' lessons. All pupils are highly enthusiastic fundraisers and have raised considerable sums of money for a worldwide Leprosy project, Children in Need and Red Nose Day, and are currently raising funds for people in the Philippines.

Pupils are exceptionally effective contributors to all aspects of school and local community life. In lessons pupils demonstrate that they can contribute and lead discussions about their learning, whether as partners or team leaders. In all classes, pupils showed that they can listen to each other and be very sensitive towards those pupils with additional needs, which ensures that all pupils are totally involved and included in researching new facts. Older pupils maturely and diligently carry out a wide range of responsibilities, such as being house captains, school councillors and supporting younger children to settle quickly and happily. In 2013 a group of junior pupils working with members of the local community, won a conservation award for designing and developing the school garden and Year 4 pupils organised and took part in a litter collecting 'Wombling Walk' around the local area. Pupils'

excellent attitudes to learning, together with their superb communication skills, mean they are exceptionally well prepared for future learning.

The quality of provision

Teaching and assessment

Teaching and assessment are excellent, ensuring that pupils are keen to succeed. During the validation, most lessons were at least well developed and often excellent. Teachers create stimulating environments, both in the classrooms, where displays are of a very high quality, particularly in Year 6, and in the open-plan 'Discovery Zones', which provide many excellent opportunities for pupils to complete challenges. Pupils are totally focused on tasks and thoroughly engaged in their well-planned lessons, which take into consideration the needs and learning styles of all pupils. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects, which inspires pupils to become independent thinkers, to have good quality discussions and to enjoy research-based activities. The virtual learning environment on the school's website allows the pupils to access extension exercises and safe websites.

Teachers' expectations of their pupils are high and the pace of learning in lessons is fast and productive. Pupils' group tasks are often set against a timer, which ensures a focused approach to their work. Problem solving, excellent opportunities for discussion, creative thinking and decision-making are all features of the highly effective approach to learning seen in many lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils collaborated exceptionally well to organize their research about Victorian life for 'The Great Exhibition' and Year 5 pupils rose to the challenge of creating a musical instrument, which varied in volume and pitch.

The school places a highly successful emphasis on the acquisition of reading, writing and mathematical skills. Excellent extended writing was seen in Year 1, where pupils described 'Marty the Monster' using exciting and descriptive vocabulary, such as 'ginormous, green feet' and 'spikey hair.' Pupils with educational needs are extremely well supported and they make very good progress at all levels in the school. The more able pupils are encouraged to be self-motivated to seek out more challenging tasks and, consequently, make excellent progress. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to all pupils' learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, open and caring. All adults support and extend learning in the classroom, in intervention groups and in the nurture room. This creates a safe and trusting learning environment, where teachers and pupils treat each other with respect and consideration. Although pupils enjoy using ICT resources and their skills progress well to support and enrich their learning, the school recognizes the need to ensure that the use of modern technology develops further so that pupils' ICT skills progress more rapidly.

The assessment of pupils' work is frequent and supports learning really well in many lessons. Assessment data is used effectively to define personalised learning targets in writing, which are stuck into pupils' books for easy reference. Pupils' literacy work is marked frequently, with some excellent examples of feedback that indicates what they have

done well and how their future work might be better. However, occasionally, marking in some mathematics' books in Key Stage 2 could be more diagnostic.

Curriculum

The excellent curriculum is meticulously planned and skilfully delivered. Consequently pupils are thoroughly engaged in their learning at all times. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils were fascinated to learn about the Tudors and their unhygienic streets, the Victorian methods of punishment and how plants' growth is affected by light. A parent commented, 'The exciting curriculum has engaged and enthused my child who is always full of what his class has learnt at school.' Excellent, detailed planning includes challenging tasks for the more able pupils and highly effective support for less confident pupils. This personalised attention to detail ensures a very clear learning direction for each pupil. A more able pupil explained how he had specific targets to ensure that he chose challenging tasks to complete and how he was given many opportunities to extend his already very good skills in mathematics. Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly harmonious so that pupils always feel very well supported to do their best in all subjects.

The theme-based curriculum allows for an in-depth, investigative approach to learning. The 'Kagan' approach to co-operative learning is highly successful in encouraging pupils to work together and support each other's learning. Pupils acquire a wide range of skills to help them become independent, life-long learners. They know how to pursue a line of research and to present their findings. Close and purposeful links with the local community give pupils experiences in the business world and in places of worship. They also benefit on the sports field through the important and dynamic contribution from the Sports Commission, where pupils are mentored to be sports buddies and coaches. This has resulted in the excellent boosting of self-confidence and healthy lifestyles in many of the pupils.

The curriculum is planned to include enrichment activities which greatly contribute to pupils' appreciation of their own environment and the culture of Guernsey. For example, the school's annual 'Guernsey Week' incorporates outdoor trips to places of historical and geographical interest such as Castle Cornet. Pupils' knowledge of the wider world is enriched through their support of various charities, such as one to provide clean water in Kenya and another to support the homeless people in the Philippines. This charity work gives pupils a better understanding of the lifestyles and cultures of other people. The choir and musical groups are well supported and pupils love participating in the Guernsey Eisteddfod. Assemblies are uplifting and often incorporate visiting speakers from local businesses and organisations as well as from other cultures and parts of the world. The pupils are given opportunities to go on exciting residential trips to France and to other Channel Islands. They relate their experiences with excitement and enthusiasm.

The curriculum incorporates the use of ICT skills to aid research and to complete high quality products, as seen in the Year 6 pupils' preparation for the Victorian Great Exhibition and in Year 4 pupils' interesting power point presentations on Tudor monarchs.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a very safe environment for pupils and the highest levels of care for their well-being. As a result, pupils say they feel very secure and happy at school and parents confirmed this in their responses to the validation questionnaire. Very thorough procedures ensure that all of the Bailiwick's requirements for health and safety are met. Training for all staff in child protection processes and thorough checks on safety procedures, for example on school trips, all contribute to the high levels of care.

The excellent arrangements for settling in Reception children, including visits to their new classes and close liaison with parents, ensure that they quickly become confident learners. From this point onwards, pupils are carefully tracked and monitored, both in their personal development and academic progress. Teachers and senior leaders are instantly alert to any signs that a pupil may be struggling and are very quick to organise specific additional support, sometimes within lessons, at other times through small group activities outside the classroom. The transition from Reception to Year 1 is very carefully managed to ease pupils gradually into the Key Stage 1 curriculum, while the move from infant to junior classes is equally well supported. Highly effective arrangements are in place to enable a smooth transition into secondary education, for example through visits to the schools pupils will move to in Year 7.

Very thorough ongoing assessment gives teachers and school leaders crystal clear information about individual pupils' rates of progress, gaps in their knowledge and understanding and any barriers to learning that may exist. Senior leaders meet with teachers every half-term to discuss each pupil's progress and identify ways to support those who may need extra help. All staff make excellent use of the school's highly developed computer systems for recording and analysing the progress of individual pupils and specific groups. For example, they compare the progress made by boys and girls, and, as a result, have successfully almost eliminated the differences they had previously identified.

In addition, the school works very closely with a wide range of external agencies to support pupils' learning and personal development. High quality professional advice and guidance for teachers and parents helps staff to meet pupils' needs through carefully planned, personalised programmes. Vulnerable pupils are very carefully monitored to ensure their needs are met, for example through the nurture group. The impact of these interventions is evaluated rigorously to gauge their effectiveness in accelerating pupils' progress. Validators saw numerous examples of pupils helping and caring for each other throughout the day.

Leadership and management

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is rigorous, systematic and accurate in determining what the school does well and where it could be improved further. Senior and middle leaders and all staff contribute in a variety of ways to evaluations of the school's effectiveness. Rigorous analysis of progress data provides valuable information about the relative achievement of different groups of pupils. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and pupil progress manager analyse progress data each term and identify where action is needed, such as additional help for pupils or training for staff. They introduced pupil progress meetings just over a year ago, after providing training for all staff to ensure consistent implementation. Staff have found these meetings very useful in helping to find ways to accelerate progress for pupils who are not doing as well as expected.

Senior, key stage and subject leaders carry out an extensive programme of lesson observations, learning walks, planning scrutinies and reviews of pupils' work, all of which contribute to their evaluations of teaching and achievement. All staff are made aware of the conclusions drawn from these reviews, which are thoroughly discussed at staff meetings and ways forward agreed. Subject leaders in literacy and numeracy have a very clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Leaders of other subjects are becoming increasingly skilled at monitoring the quality of provision and pupils' progress. For example, regular whole school assessments of pupils' observational drawing skills give a clear view of the impact of the curriculum. An annual audit of the whole curriculum identifies strengths and areas for improvement which inform subject leaders' action plans and the overall school development plan. A formalised cycle of review has recently brought greater rigour to the process. Pupils' views are sought through the school council, who discuss ways they would like to improve the school. Annual parent questionnaires gather the views of parents which also feed into the school's self-evaluation. The school takes careful account of these views when deciding on future priorities.

The school's conclusions about its performance are exceptionally accurate in terms of its many strengths and the priorities for its improvement. The evidence in the REP and the other evidence gathered during the validation process corroborate the school's judgements that:

- pupils' enjoyment and achievement are excellent
- pupils' personal development is excellent

- teaching and assessment are excellent
- the curriculum is excellent
- care, guidance and support are excellent
- the school's self-evaluation is excellent
- leadership and management are excellent
- the school's capacity to improve is excellent

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher's enthusiasm and commitment inspire and encourage staff to give of their very best. Senior leaders are reflective, never resting on their laurels but always seeking new ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils can achieve their full potential. They constantly strive for excellence in all aspects of school life. Senior leaders lead by example in the classroom, as well as sharing their expertise with colleagues through support and coaching. Leaders at all levels give a very strong sense of direction to the school and their ambitious goals are shared by all staff. These goals are translated into highly focused development plans with clear timelines for completion and regular reviews of progress made. Whole-school targets are skilfully broken down into key stage, year group and individual pupil targets which are checked and updated frequently.

A comprehensive programme of professional development links closely to the whole-school targets, while also being tailored to staff's individual needs. All staff are supported exceptionally well and consequently morale is very high. Throughout the school, there is a sense of consistency of approach because staff have embraced key initiatives and strategies positively. This is largely because the headteacher and senior leaders take time to research, consider and decide on what is the best way forward for the school and then introduce new ideas gradually, providing on-going training and support for staff until the initiative is fully embedded. For example, the innovative implementation of 'Kagan' strategies has been very carefully managed, although in a very small number of lessons teachers new to Kagan co-operative learning need further professional development.

The school's excellent commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils is evident in the comprehensive systems for checking pupils' progress and identifying those who are not making the maximum progress they are capable of. Senior leaders rigorously analyse the performance of different groups, including boys, girls, the most able and pupils with special educational needs. This has led to highly effective interventions to eliminate any uneven progress.

The leadership and management have successfully created a highly cohesive school community where shared values and expectations are evident in all classes. Excellent links with the church and local community enhance pupils' learning greatly. Pupils benefit from visits from members of the community who bring learning to life and extend pupils' understanding of Guernsey's heritage. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to participate in island events, such as the Eisteddfod and sports competitions. The schools' close partnerships with parents and a wide range of external agencies also enhance pupils' learning. Parents feel very welcome in school and find the informative 'training' events very enlightening, such as those about how the school teaches phonics and mathematics. The productive partnerships with businesses provide trained volunteers who read with pupils and act as very positive role models.

Capacity to improve

The capacity to improve is excellent. The very positive post validation visit in May 2011 identified just one improvement area which was the need to improve the defining of success criteria for learning in lessons and in feedback to pupils. Senior leaders responded very swiftly and effectively to this issue by providing whole school training on how to write 'child friendly' learning intentions and success criteria. They then carried out very rigorous and regular monitoring to make sure that all staff were using clear learning objectives and detailed success criteria in every lesson to enable pupils to understand what they are aiming for and what steps they needed to take to get there. It was very evident during the validation that success criteria are now used in every lesson and in many instances the pupils devised their own. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils confidently described the actions they needed to take to complete division sums with remainders.

The school's impressive track record over time shows a consistently rising trend in pupils' attainment so that standards are normally above the Bailiwick averages in English, mathematics and science at both Level 4 and Level 5 at the end of Year 6. In 2013 even more pupils achieved Levels 4, 5 and 6 than in previous years due to several robust school initiatives, such as highly effective co-operative learning, pupil progress meetings to highlight any pupils requiring additional support and the school's rigorous target setting policy. The school's self-evaluation is exceptionally accurate, as evidenced by the fact that validators and a recent school review by a group of Guernsey education officers agree completely with all the school's judgements and main priorities for improvement in the REP. Senior leaders involve all staff in identifying the main areas for development and the strategies necessary to implement them. All new initiatives are monitored rigorously to ensure they are having an impact on pupils' learning. For example, the special needs leader has evaluated the recently introduced intervention groups that provide support for pupils who need extra help with literacy and numeracy. The senior leadership team are highly skilled and talented and strive constantly for excellence in all aspects of the school's work.

They very successfully analyse data to pinpoint precisely which pupils require additional support or increased challenge in their learning.

The school's planning for improvement is excellent. The comprehensive development plan is exceptionally clear and easy to follow and addresses all the areas for improvement identified in the school's self-evaluation. This provides everyone in the school with a coherent agenda for improvement and a very clear sense of direction. The priorities are understood by all staff who share senior leaders' ambitious vision for the future development of St Martin's.

Reception

The Reception leader provides very clear direction for the development of the provision, which has led to significant improvements, both in the quality of provision for Reception children and in their attainment and progress over the last three years. In 2011, around a third of children reached a good level of development by the end of Reception; in 2013 this rose to just over three quarters of children. During the same period, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment, which had been wide, narrowed considerably so that boys' attainment was much closer to that of girls. New initiatives in the teaching of phonics, reading, writing and calculations have successfully accelerated children's progress.

Overall, children make good progress from their very varied starting points. Progress is excellent in personal and social development because staff give this very high priority when children start school, laying very effective foundations for future learning. A programme of visits to pre-schools, taster sessions for pupils the term before they start, meetings with parents and informative leaflets about routines all serve to prepare children very well for starting school. The Foundation Stage leader has developed a curriculum that provides children with a rich, stimulating variety of very well planned learning activities, including direct teaching of skills and opportunities for exploration and learning through play. For example, after learning about the story of 'The Hungry Caterpillar' children explored the outdoor area looking for bugs, made fruit smoothies using 'Hungry Caterpillar' fruit and looked at books about minibeasts. As a result of interesting and engaging activities, children become engrossed in learning and develop into very successful learners.

The introduction of a 'continuous provision' programme has provided children with increased opportunities to take an active role in their own learning, selecting activities and suggesting areas that they would like to investigate. Significant improvements to the outdoor area have also greatly enhanced learning. Occasionally, when all Reception children are engaged in self-chosen activities at the same time, it becomes difficult for staff to constantly supervise every area. The more recent introduction of 'enhanced provision' is adding a further dimension to learning. Assessment procedures have also improved and are much more rigorous than they have been in the past. Adults observe, question, probe

and support children well as they play and learn. Useful prompt charts in each area of learning provide guidance for teaching assistants and parent helpers by highlighting key questions to extend learning. Adults observe and evaluate children's learning throughout the day, jotting key points on post-it notes which they then stick on children's photographs. Teachers then transfer this information into children's individual record books which they review regularly to identify where any gaps in learning need to be addressed.

Comments on the views of parents and carers

Over three quarters of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is a very good level of response. The returns indicate that the great majority of parents have extremely positive views of the school, with almost all indicating that: their son/daughter enjoys their education; pupils work hard, make very good progress, learn to be responsible and get on well with others; the teaching is very good; and the school is well led and managed. Many parents took the time and trouble to write in praise of the school. For example, one parent, speaking for many, wrote, 'The school community is warm and very welcoming. The care, nurturing and education are outstanding.'

Whilst responses were exceptionally positive in all areas, a very small number of parents and carers tended to disagree that the school provides a range of interesting activities outside normal school hours. Validators looked closely at this and found that the school provides excellent enrichment activities. Some of these parents would like after-school care provision but this is not provided by the school as it does not always prove to be financially viable.

Main area for school improvement

- Implement the plans to provide increased opportunities and hardware for pupils to apply their technology skills in all subjects.