

St Martin's C of E Primary and Nursery School



School Improvement Report 2013-14



Introduction

As we end our second year at St Martin's, we can look back and see the impact of our mission statement, 'To Be The Best We Can Be,' and our Christian values of love, kindness, faith, grace, mercy and hope that are embedded within all the we strive for and achieve at St Martin's. Our journey, through the rapid rate of growth of our school (from 32 pupils to 312 in the space of 2 years) has been a challenging one but one that has encompassed many successes along the way. The successes have been made possible through the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of our children, staff, governors, the Church, outside organisations and the wider community. I would like to thank everyone for all of the energy, time and goodwill they have given to our school improvement priorities and I know, when you read the report, you will recognise that we have a lot to celebrate!

The report is organised under the headings of our school improvement priorities, for each area we looked at successes, any challenges to and any next steps that we need to take. There may be some aspects of the report that use language that is unfamiliar, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff or a member of the governing body to explain anything to you. A team of governors and staff have responsibility for various school improvement priorities, these teams are known as 'SIP Teams'.

You are invited to look at the report and if you would like to respond in any way to any of the points raised, please use the form at the back of the report or arrange to come in and see me.

A huge thank you to everyone involved in the success of our school.

Tania Beard

Headteacher

ACHIEVEMENT and QUALITY OF TEACHING

Area of School Improvement:

1.1 Children are able to make links between learning experiences, they value questions, think critically and apply their learning in a variety of contexts.

Successes

- Children have continued to learn how to value questions, to reflect on their learning and to think critically.
- Buzz Boards continue to be used very well and show the development of questioning throughout the year. All boards are unique to each class but each classroom has a board so all children familiar with the process. Buzz Boards help children develop their questioning (and to ask more good quality questions as they get older)
- Staff have worked with the children to develop their reflective thinking. Children have been filmed working on this, and staff have used these videos to improve practice further.
- Older children are encouraged to be reflective in their written work. The Foundation Stage Unit (FSU) makes use of photos and film clips of the children. Children in the FSU have also had opportunities to share their Learning Journeys with their parents.
- The use of Talk Partners is now embedded across the school.
- The Philosophy for Children training took place. Children have benefited from this approach and some of the children who can struggle with aspects of school life have been able to shine when asked to consider philosophical questions. Children have commented that they have learned that they can disagree with another child's view but remain friends. In Philosophy there are no 'right' answers, and helps children to be brave about learning and contributing.
- The FSU has worked on children developing ownership of their Learning Journals. Staff have trialled the children talking about their own learning once a week, and have taken photos of the children talking about what they have learned. This work has highlighted differences between what staff think the children have learned and what the children say they have learned.
- Learning narratives have time built in for reflection, and because of this the children are more powerfully involved and the children's voices are clearer in the reflections made.
- New staff and children have adapted well to the practice of reflecting. It is felt that this is because the environment feels safe and as the other children now reflect as a matter of course, the new children are happy to follow their lead. Staff inset sessions re-visit the key principles for new staff and work to further develop existing staff's learning as well.
- The children's ability and confidence to be open, ask questions and express themselves has been noted by people external to the school when the children have been on trips off site.
- The principles involved reflect the principles stated in the school's 'Being The Best We Can Be' document, and allow the children to have a growth mindset. Children are able to see learning as a chain of experiences that they can learn from and make connections between.
- The process of reflection and philosophical thinking is a very social type of learning and supports children becoming inter-dependent.

- Some reflective work links clearly to Collective Worship and the Christian ethos of the school.

Challenges

- Building in time for reflection on Fridays which are extremely busy can be challenging, and requires teachers to be especially organised to ensure it is completed.
- Initially some children felt inhibited when reflecting but with support and encouragement from the teachers they have now become comfortable with the process.

Next Steps

- Develop use of Buzz Boards covering the whole year
- Continue to develop good questioning throughout the school

Area of School Improvement:

2.1 To create more opportunities for problem solving across the curriculum and to create a culture in which it is seen as good practice for teachers to develop learning opportunities that are child driven.

Successes

- Staff meetings have been a positive platform for drawing out ideas and sharing what is happening in classrooms. They have provided opportunities for reflecting as a staff team, as well as being an opportunity to share good practice and consolidate learning.
- There are strong relationships of trust between staff and the Governing Body, underpinned by the strong ethos of the school.
- Opportunities have been created across the school for children to develop their problem solving skills e.g. the FSU planning a banquet for 90 children. The children were asked to work out the amount of food needed, how much food each child would need, how to make the pizzas and how each child would identify their own pizza after being cooked. The children managed all of this very well and also helped to set up and tidy away. The children in Oak class organised their own market during French Week and also set up a sweet shop as their enterprise project. They had to work out how to spend the money raised, detailing the costs and the implications for the different options. The children were able to see the practical applications for Maths and develop an appreciation for budgeting.
- Scrutiny of Learning Journals has taken place in Phase 1 with Phases 2 and 3 to be looked at before the end of the Summer Term. From the Phase 1 scrutiny work looking at Prime Areas, it was identified that adult observations needed more clarity on what to look for, and subsequently training was arranged to address this. Adults were also trained to look for children problem solving between themselves, as well as children demonstrating motivation and perseverance.

Challenges

- None identified.

Next Steps

- Undertake an audit of problem solving, building on the work the FSU have started in this area.
- Incorporate asking the children to identify what is the important thing they have learned
- Invite parents in to come into the FSU more regularly to talk to their children about what they have been learning.

Area of School Improvement:

1.2 Children become increasingly involved in creating their own targets, reflect effectively on their learning and can work with teaching staff to identify their next steps in maths.

Successes

- The school identified that it was important in Autumn 2013 to focus on developing children's understanding of the number system and curricular targets were linked to this focus throughout the school.
- Teachers have worked hard to make quick assessments of new children's mathematical understanding and identify any gaps to be addressed.
- Teachers re-teach core Maths principles to ensure all children fully secure with these.
- High quality inset has been delivered to all staff by the school's subject leader for maths who was previously a maths advisor for Devon. In addition to this the school have recently appointed a new teacher who was a lead maths teacher within Devon who has already begun to make an impact in Phase 2. Both the inset and the strong curriculum leadership are supporting teachers in being able to scaffold learning for children so they are able to think more creatively and independently.

Challenges

- The children are not in the position to set their own targets yet.
- Phase 2 are trying to address the greatest area of need for the children who they have and who have arrived at different times. Creating a common language of maths in each classroom in Phase 2 and 3 is a particular challenge as children arrive from other schools with different languages and different methods – some of which they understand and some of which are procedural.
- In Spring 2014, the school set a curricular target focussed on understanding the links between multiplication and division; there was a clear focus on the use of images to support this understanding and some of the newer teachers needed support with delivering this area of understanding with appropriate images and correct notation. Both NQTs observed Steph Harvey running Pupil Progress Meetings with children from their class and next steps were offered.
- The clear focus on targets within the Summer Term was partly lost due to the need to prioritise preparing children for their SATs.

- Some teachers are not always confident in their own understanding of Maths or in the use of language of Maths. Modelling risk taking and being curious is therefore more difficult for those teachers who are not secure in doing this themselves.
- Teachers need to accept that the impact of their work may not be seen within an academic year or even within primary school. Teachers have to develop the trust that the approach taken at St. Martin's will be effective in the long-term and prepare children appropriately for secondary school.

Next Steps

- Teachers to support children to develop as mathematical learners, and encourage them to be brave about asking questions and being comfortable with the idea that they may not always have the correct answer. Success will be if the children feel brave and are able to be open to learning.
- Staff to work with children's understanding of language and explore use of imagery to get children to a place where they know and think enough to be able to apply Maths.
- Identify a member of the teaching team in Phase 1 to have particular responsibility for monitoring maths teaching and learning.
- Continue to focus on addressing gaps in understanding.
- Continue to ensure that children are able to do Mental Maths quickly and without the need for workings out.
- Through staff training, staff are to be encouraged to have fun with Maths and be creative with their teaching, and to take risks themselves.
- Develop the use of solid resources with older children to undertake more sophisticated Maths tasks.

Area of School Improvement:

2.2 To critically select from the new curriculum for maths and to develop a common framework of the ethos of maths teaching within the school amongst new and existing staff.

Successes

- Progression in Calculation documents have been produced for each Phase, with teachers asked to trial the progression of skills.
- Nat Padley (NP) has been appointed to lead Phase 2, and as a leading Maths teacher, she has been able to direct and model for the two NQTs more closely. Both NQTs have watched NP teach and they have taught as a Phase on occasions which provides opportunities for a consistent approach.
- From Spring, Phases 1 and 2 have been using the new Devon Curriculum Guidance to teach from. From the summer term, Phase 3 have also begun to use Devon planning.
- The application of number across measure is beginning to emerge as children are more secure with their basic numeracy.
- Phase 2 and 3 ran a lesson study model to support guided work in maths; opportunities were made available for NQTs to observe the subject leader and subsequent sessions were videoed. Phase 2 and 3 staff shared their videos and reflected on their successes and identified room for improvement. Teachers felt that videoing themselves was a powerful tool to support themselves as reflective practitioners.
- Staff INSET has been provided on focusing on Progression in Calculation; use of imagery

in mathematics; a focus on Cuisenaire and Numicon; problem solving and critical thinking.

- Within Phase 2 and 3 there has been an increased focus on developing children's mathematical thinking and Nrich website is a rich source of ideas. Some of the more able children in school are beginning to reflect a greater confidence in generalising, reasoning and deriving new knowledge from previously known facts – this reflects an important shift in teaching of maths at St. Martin's where children are not expected to know the answer but are expected to share their thinking and reasoning to solve problems.
- The Early Years team are secure in their Maths teaching and challenge children to think.

Challenges

- Reviewing the Progression in Calculation documents has been challenging with new staff frequently starting.
- It is difficult for NQTs to observe expertise by visiting other schools as no other schools in the area are like St. Martin's.
- As a growing school there are too many classes for the subject leader to maintain a clear focus across each class, and for greater accountability these tasks need to be delegated within teams.

Next Steps

- Develop a maths specialist within each phase who can support within phase, and as a maths team can reflect on progress and issues within each phase.
- Once an expert is identified within each phase, then Pupil Progress Meetings can be managed within phase, with some external moderating coming from the subject leader.
- Establish the 'maths team' (to be led by the subject leader) which will have each phase represented, and a governor represented. The Maths team will meet half termly to monitor maths across the school, as it has been identified that more rigorous half termly monitoring is required. From this, decisions will be made as to what is needed next in each Phase. Next steps will be led by each Phase, but feedback will be provided to the Subject Leader. Due to increasing pupil numbers, it will be possible to compare two same-age classes.
- Create opportunities for reflecting on the use of the Devon Curriculum Guidance.
- Use the 'Mind the Gap' programme from September 2014 for focussed, teacher-led intervention once all Phases are secure using the Devon plans.
- Staff to use the Iris camera as a whole-school resource for developing practice.

Area of School Improvement:

1.3 Children become increasingly involved in creating their own targets, reflect effectively on their learning and can work with teaching staff to identify their next steps in literacy.

2.3 To trial the new curriculum and to develop the way in which literacy skills are embedded throughout the curriculum.

Successes

- Staff have been working to improve the quality of guided work and identifying next steps children need to take, with new approaches being trialled in Years 2 and 3. Targets are linked with sequences and planning in order to identify what will have the most impact.
- Over-arching teaching targets are now grouped. Groups are made up of children of similar ability and next steps are identified according to the needs of each group. Children who have been identified as needing extra support with their writing skills also have pictorial reminders of their individual targets on their velcro pencils in class. These methods have had a visible impact and have moved a number of children from working at Level 2C to Level 2B. In addition, children have been able to explain what they have been learning.
- Staff have received training and support to understand and be able to use School Pupil Tracker effectively.
- New staff have received training on using Bug Club.
- Learning narratives have supported children in becoming engaged with writing.
- Due to the amount of work that has been put into improving writing in different contexts and genres, children's writing perseverance and stamina has noticeably increased as well.
- Rebecca Cosgrave (Literacy Advisor) has supported staff with inset, target setting, writing moderation and also with the school on the Year 6 project.
- The school has invested in a sentence tool-kit and received training on how to use this most effectively. Governors saw evidence of this being used in marking during their Visits Week.
- Staff inset has been held on developing marking to accelerate learning and to develop ways of sharing targets with the children. This approach to marking is now embedded in the school, and is modelled by NP to new staff on a daily basis.
- Year 6 writing progress was greatly accelerated because of SH's specific marking – noticing what has been achieved, and what needs to be worked on.
- Rebecca Cosgrave has modelled how to support more able children in guided reading sessions.
- All staff have undertaken Talk for Writing training, and the impact of using the strategies learned from this has been evident across the school.
- Children are encouraged to use Bug Club through rewards for readers of the week and regular readers.
- 35% of Year 6 children achieved Level 5 in their Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar tests.

Challenges

- Due to the focus on improving writing, some children are now doing better with their writing than their reading, which is unusual.

Next Steps

- Develop the approach of group targets/learning across the whole school.
- Develop guided reading across the school, with a focus on improving the variety of texts purchased

- Develop marking across the whole school so that it becomes more specific, and notices and names achievements as well as next steps to work towards.
- Continue work on supporting more able children in guided reading sessions.
- Develop guided reading planning formats – look at use of questions, follow up work and linking work to AF levels.
- Establish more links between guided writing to guided reading to writing narratives.
- Develop children's ability to self-assess.
- Work towards a wide range of writing being achieved across the curriculum and not just in literacy books.
- Work with higher achieving children to achieve higher levels (Level 3 at KS1 and Levels 5 and 6 at KS2)
- Review school Reading Policy in relation to Phases.
- Increase focus on spelling from Year 2 and upwards, in line with the greater emphasis placed on this in the new curriculum. Inset on spelling to be arranged. From September, each KS2 child will have a daily spelling session, with the aim of keeping the session fun, exciting and motivating. Spelling journals to be used across Phases 2 and 3.
- Establish a Literacy Team, with NP as Literacy Lead. The Literacy Team will be trained to take Pupil Progress Meetings.

BEHAVIOUR AND SAFETY

Area of School Improvement:

3.1 Children to take a lead role in modelling and disseminating the culture at St. Martin's to children who are newcomers to the school and to those children who may find meeting the expectations of the school more challenging.

3.2 Staff to model their understanding of the learning process for children and new members of staff.

Successes

- The 'Being The Best We Can Be' document was shared with all staff in September 2013, with existing staff working with new staff to explore the ethos of the school and how to practically realise the principles in this document. The five key fundamentals to work to are clearly displayed on the board in the staff room and underpin the way in which the whole school works.
- There is a Child-speak version of the 'Being The Best We Can Be' document in every classroom and the Learning Ambassadors lead new children in understanding this and living it at St Martin's.
- Due to the focus in school on developing the children as creative learners who are able to reflect on the process of learning, the children now have a vocabulary for talking about learning. The Governing Body also use the same language and express their aim to be the best that they can be.
- The culture of being the best they can be is so strong and fully embedded into school life that new children now settle seamlessly into this culture and follow how other children are behaving.
- Photos have been taken of the children 'being the best they can be' for display in the school, but these will be repeated on higher quality equipment so the photos can be

enlarged and printed on to canvas.

- The principles and five key fundamentals of the school are continually re-visited with staff so all are very secure with these. This has given a strong core to the school, as well as a sense of team and unity. Staff are all very supportive of each other and have a consistent approach.
- Children have been elected as Learning Ambassadors, and they are firmly established within the school. Governors have met with them, and found them to be very positive and engaged with their role. The role encourages autonomy and a sense of responsibility and independence.
- Children are very motivated by the reward scheme in place at the school. They understand why they are being rewarded, and what they need to do to be the best that they can be. Rewards vary across the school dependent on the age of the children, and are tailored to always celebrate effort, as it is effort that results in change and seeing these changes enables children to realise and believe that change is possible.
- The Celebration of Learning assemblies continue to be well attended by parents, with often 30-40 parents present. Parents understand and appreciate the reward system.

Challenges

- None identified.

Next Steps

- Continue to induct new staff and children, and further strengthen the ethos that forms the bedrock of all that the school does.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Area of School Improvement:

4.1 To develop the use of coaching across the school to support and enhance professional and personal development.

Successes

- There have been two whole-school staff coaching sessions facilitated by Kelly Newland, including the administrative team. Governor and pupil sessions are planned for the next school year.
- The Senior Leadership Team and Kelly met to consider the question “How can we develop and support a culture of learning that is curious, creative and bold?”. They also discussed how reflective and creative thinking can be used in Inset training.
- Coaching has been identified as “not more to do but a way of being”.

Challenges

- The school was unable to get funding for the full programme that was planned, therefore it is important that the vision of the ‘coaching culture’ is not lost.

Next Steps

- Plan coaching sessions for pupils and governors to implement the whole school ethos.
- Provide children with the opportunities to explore how and what they want to learn, and to facilitate these opportunities.
- Look more closely at learning narratives and develop continuous provision throughout the school (currently already in use in the Foundation Stage Unit).
- Consider what it looks like to be a reflective thinker at different ages across the school.

Area of School Improvement:

4.2 Governing Body to develop a greater sense of ownership and self-direction in their leadership of the school, thus being less reliant on the head teacher.

Successes

- The Governing Body has developed and improved its practice and understanding through attending in house training as well as external training course. Governors have a more thorough understanding of data – demonstrated by more and better quality questions asked at Governing Body meetings
- The Governing Body is more self-aware and has undertaken a full self-assessment - overall, governors have judged governance as 'good'.
- Meetings are more strategic and focused, as demonstrated by the minutes. The Chair not only ensures this happens, but also pro-actively leads Governing Body work both within and outside of meetings
- A Governor Visits week held in the Spring Term. This successfully created a focus and meant visits happened in line with the agreed monitoring cycle. Visit reports linked well with aims of SIP action plans and increased children's understanding of role of Governing Body, as well as strengthening relationships between staff and governors.
- The Governing Body has held two meetings without Headteacher present to focus on developing its practice and improving governance. The Governing Body agreed a cycle for monitoring school improvement work.
- The Governing Body now only has one vacancy. New governors bring relevant skills to the Governing Body and mean that Committees are well staffed
- Information on Governing Body work and pictures of governors are included more frequently in the school newsletter. Several new governors applied after seeing information on the Governing Body web page on the school website.

Challenges

- The Governing Body has had six new governors this year – whilst governance is considerably stronger than previously, it needs to work towards all governors being secure in their understanding of their role, being able to contribute effectively and clear on their strategic responsibilities.

Next Steps

- Address need for strong succession planning – respond to Government guidance regarding Chairs needing to have relevant skills and not just be 'willing to serve'.

Develop Chair & Vice-Chair Skills Audit to allow governors to be well informed when voting.

- Ensure that new governors integrate into the Governing Body and develop their knowledge of governance. Give consideration to mentoring process – should this continue to be shared or one person hold responsibility?
- Ensure that the Governing Body is sufficiently skilled/trained to manage issues common to larger schools (admissions appeals, complaints etc)
- Give consideration to how the Governing Body can raise its profile amongst parents and within community (improve page on school website, have representation at Parents' Evenings etc)

Area of School Improvement:

4.3 To further develop the Christian identity of the school within the school and the wider community.

Successes

- Reverend Mark has become a very important part of the school and the children's lives. Reverend Mark supports those children and staff who want to engage on a deeper level with their own spiritual journey, and provides a strong lead for class collective worship.
- Work has begun on establishing a school Ethos Group – governors have been identified to sit on the group.
- There is regular governor attendance at Collective Worship.
- The Governing Body undertook a Learning Walk to explore the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- Collective worship at St. Martin's is a bespoke programme for the school which has been written by the Headteacher and Reverend Mark. It follows the learning narratives and links to the six Christian values of love, kindness, grace, hope, mercy and faith. Reverend Mark has written a song relating to the six values which all the children have learned. There are also banners and displays unique to each classroom which reflect and interpret these values.
- The children continue to encounter an understanding of the Christian faith where there is a strong presence of biblical narrative and meaning for today's world.
- The children have learnt the Lord's Prayer
- The children have learnt a number of traditional and modern worship songs
- The children are encouraged to engage in worship which is often tangible
- Parents have articulated a difference in their child's understanding of Christianity, worship and prayer
- The liturgical cycle is celebrated
- The weekly newsletter includes a synopsis of the Collective Worship Bible narrative and the teaching from the story.
- Every class has a Collective Worship area.
- The 'Church' notice board is now up and being used

- The Church meets frequently on the school premises and is starting to find its place in the pattern within the school and liturgical year
- The 'service' events of the church are undertaken on school premises underlining the ethos and celebrating God's blessing
- The Church was able to fund the leavers Bibles

Challenges

- There are currently only a small number of school families who attend Cornerstone events.
- Reverend Mark is finding that the pulls on his time are rapidly increasing and this is likely to continue further as the town and community grow.

Next Steps

- Consider ways to increase the numbers of families attending Cornerstone events
- Plan an event for school staff, pupils, governors and parents to identify future actions for the school's Ethos Group
- Begin planning for art group

FEEDBACK SHEET

Aspects of the Report that have impressed me:

Questions I would like to ask:

Comments I would like to make:

Signed (optional)

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