

St Martin's School

15 Stokewood Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH3 7NA

Inspection dates

26–28 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher brings energy and commitment to her relatively new role. She is driven by her belief in securing the best possible future for pupils, whatever their abilities or aptitudes.
- The headteacher, supported ably by the deputy head, is overhauling and modernising the school's procedures and structures well. This is bringing greater coherence to the school's work on, for example, curriculum design.
- Teaching in the school is good. It is built upon the solid foundation of strong relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at St Martin's and are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave at age 11.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. They are generally well behaved.
- Support for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. In her role as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the headteacher has a thorough understanding of each pupil. As a result, their needs are well met and they progress well.
- The education provided to children in the early years requires improvement. The physical environment is not conducive to children learning from play, indoors and out. Phonics teaching lacks precision.
- Strategic planning for the school's future does not focus sharply enough on the impact of proposed actions on pupils' progress, nor does it link closely enough to teacher training and management of teachers' performance.
- The school meets the independent school standards, but in one or two instances record-keeping needs to be clearer.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that strategic planning focuses closely on promoting pupils' progress and links consistently with teacher training and appraisal.
- Improve the early years provision by:
 - ensuring that the physical environment provides greater opportunities for children to learn through play and apply that learning independently, both in the classroom and outside it
 - sharpening the precision with which phonics is taught.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides strong and committed leadership to the school. This is recognised by all, from the proprietors and staff to the pupils and their parents. Underlying all that she does is a commitment to securing the best possible futures for all the pupils in the school. As a result, pupils receive a good education and are well prepared for their movement on to secondary school.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2016 and quickly and energetically began to overhaul and modernise the schools' systems and procedures. This helped to ensure that the school met the independent school standards and other requirements. Nonetheless, record-keeping needs to be clearer in some areas of the school's work.
- School leaders are currently undertaking a root-and-branch review of the curriculum, a process being led well by the newly appointed deputy head. As a result, the curriculum is becoming more coherent and cross-curricular links are strengthening. The curriculum is balanced and broad. Pupils study a wide range of subjects and by the time they reach Year 6 they are taking 12 different courses, including two languages.
- The academic curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These include a variety of sporting and creative opportunities for pupils, which they enthusiastically take up. Regular school trips take place, the most recent being a trip to a local Hindu festival. Year 6 pupils greatly enjoyed this trip and it added significantly to their understanding of diversity in Britain today.
- Through such activities, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, as are fundamental British values. These are also very actively promoted through the newly designed personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Overall, therefore, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very strong. The headteacher, in her role as SENCo, has a comprehensive understanding of each pupil's individual needs. Initial identification of needs is well developed. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.
- School leaders have a clearly established framework to monitor pupils' attainment and assess their progress. As a result, they can easily identify pupils who require additional support or whose needs might be changing over time.
- School leaders' strategic planning has improved under the current headteacher. Nonetheless, it still does not pay sufficient attention to the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress over time. Nor does it link closely enough to teachers' training and their performance management. Teachers do now have greater access to training, however, than they had in the past.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. The proprietor role is carried out by four members of the same family and they have a clear vision of the whole school community

as one big 'family'. They are strongly committed to the school's future and have just invested in a substantial refurbishment of the school's information technology (IT) system. As a result, pupils now have greater access to IT during lessons, which was an area for improvement from the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead and has established a strong culture of safeguarding characterised by high levels of vigilance from staff. As a result, any concerns are quickly identified and swiftly acted upon. Pupils commented on how staff always listen to them and take what they say seriously. In Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of their opinions, all the parents who responded agreed that their children were safe at the school and well looked after.
- The school's safeguarding policy is thorough and pays due regard to the latest guidance from the Secretary of State, contained in 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016. The policy is published on the school's website in line with the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The school makes all the required pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff. These are recorded in the single central register. There were some clerical omissions in this document but they were quickly rectified during the inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons and schemes of work are well planned.
- Particularly effective use of specialist teachers is made to enhance children's lessons in subjects such as modern foreign languages and music. As a result, pupils are taught well across the whole of the school's broad and balanced curriculum, as the work they produce demonstrates.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Much of the successful teaching in the school is built on this strong foundation of trust. Teachers know their pupils well and can pitch work at the right level for pupils' ability and aptitudes. Occasionally, work for the most able is initially too easy and this delays them moving on to more challenging tasks.
- Teachers' understanding of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and as a result they receive effective teaching that helps them to make good progress.
- Teachers provide parents with meaningful and helpful reports on the progress that their children are making throughout the year. This is augmented by well-established handover routines at the end of the day, when teachers report to parents on how well the day has gone.
- When it is done effectively, teachers use questioning to probe, assess and develop pupils' understanding. Sometimes, however, questioning is less successfully used. In such cases it often elicits simple answers which are not built upon to deepen pupils' knowledge,

understanding and skills.

- Teachers have high expectations of the conduct of pupils in lessons, and for the most part these are put into practice. On occasions, however, low-level disruption is allowed to continue for too long before being tackled.
- Teaching of reading is good, and there is a culture of reading, including reading for pleasure, in the school. Reading is celebrated and well-established links with home ensure that reading is supported outside of school. Phonics teaching in the early years, however, lacks precision and accuracy at times.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Typically, pupils grow into self-confident and self-assured learners. They develop the habits and understanding of how to be a successful learner well. A minority of pupils have yet to develop such habits, however, and the school is working with them to promote this aspect of personal development.
- Building on the strong culture of safeguarding, pupils' knowledge of how to stay safe in a variety of contexts is well developed. Sessions on, for example, road safety or how to stay safe online make a strong impact on pupils' understanding. Pupils are safe and feel safe.
- Pupils say that there is very little or no bullying at the school. They are confident that, should bullying occur, teachers would deal with it well. The parents who responded to the Parent View survey had no concerns about bullying.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted well by sporting activities and their emotional well-being is supported by the family ethos of the school. Pupils are kind to each other and willing to express their gratitude for the kindnesses shown to them by their classmates.
- Some pupils say they would like more opportunities to reflect on values such as right and wrong, and to express their own views.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance is good and improving. The school has implemented a new reward system for high rates of attendance. As a result of this, and the fact that pupils enjoy and value their schooling, persistent absence rates are low. Pupils wear their uniform smartly and this is a further indication that they are proud to attend St Martin's.
- Pupils generally conduct themselves well in lessons and in their movement around the school. They are courteous and polite. The majority of them can exercise self-discipline in the classroom. There are some pupils, however, who find it difficult to rise to the high standards the school expects. Occasionally, this is not picked up quickly or dealt with well enough by teachers, and learning is temporarily interrupted as a result.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in the school are making typically good progress in most year groups and across most subjects, including English and mathematics. As they move through the school, pupils develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills. This prepares them well for the transition to secondary school. Many pupils at the school go on to pass the entrance examinations for local selective schools.
- Similarly, the strength of the provision for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means that they make progress at a similar rate to other pupils with the same starting points. The most able pupils also make good progress overall, although occasionally the levels of challenge they face in lessons is not quite high enough. The school does not have any disadvantaged pupils.
- This pattern of typically good progress is clearly evident in the work pupils produce during their time at St Martin's. It is confirmed by the school's own tracking system, which uses nationally benchmarked tests to assess pupils' attainment and progress on a regular basis.
- Specialist teaching allows pupils to make good progress in subjects beyond English and mathematics. In French, for example, which pupils study from Year 3 onwards, pupils make very quick progress.
- Pupils read well. Inspectors listened to pupils reading in a variety of contexts, including in lessons. This showed that most pupils are fluent readers and many have reading ages well in advance of their chronological ages. Those who are less strong readers receive additional support which allows them to catch up and to make good progress in their reading skills.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The provision for children in the early years meets all the requirements of the independent school standards and the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage', 2017. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the provision and outcomes that are not good. As a result, the education provided in the early years requires improvement.
- The physical environment of the early years provision and the way it is used is limiting children's learning, particularly so far as child-initiated activity is concerned. Children do not have easy access to a range of stimulating activities, either in the classroom or outside. This limits their ability to follow up their curiosity and develop their concentration, perseverance and independence. It also limits their chances to apply what they have learned from adult-led activities for themselves.
- Phonics teaching lacks precision and accuracy. Children are not securely developing the basics of forming initial sounds and this does not set effective foundations for the development of more complex phonics skills, such as blending sounds together.
- In 2017, 46% of children attained a good level of development in their early years foundation stage profile. This is well below the national level. The key issue in preventing more children reaching a good level of development was their writing, particularly that produced independently in child-initiated activities.

- Inconsistent reinforcement of behavioural expectations means that the classroom environment is not as orderly as it should be.
- To their credit, the leadership and teachers of the early years are aware of the limitations of the provision as currently constituted. They have some imaginative ideas about how to develop the early years, including new assessment methods, but these have yet to be fully implemented or to have a significant impact.
- The school forges good links with parents of children in the early years and there are plans to involve them more closely in their child's education through the use of new technology. Again this development is in its infancy and has not had the chance to reveal its full potential.
- As it is in the main school, safeguarding in the early years is highly effective and there are no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	113940
DfE registration number	837/6003
Inspection number	10033883

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mary Shenton, Jane Williams, Nicola Tinacci and Tim Shenton
Headteacher	Laura Richards
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,505–£7,311
Telephone number	01202 292011
Website	www.stmartinsschool.net
Email address	admin@stmartinsschool.net
Date of previous inspection	3–5 June 2014

Information about this school

- St Martin's School is a small, independent primary school. It has a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of all faiths and none. Its previous standard inspection took place on 3 to 5 June 2014.
- The school was founded in 1914 and the current proprietors' family acquired the school in 1976.
- The school has a much smaller proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities than the national average. None have either an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school has no disadvantaged pupils. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils learning in lessons and took the opportunity to talk to them about their work. They also scrutinised samples of pupils' work over time and listened to some of them read.
- Inspectors met with the proprietors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other staff. Ten responses to the staff survey were taken into account.
- A wide range of documents were considered by inspectors, including those relating to safeguarding and the pre-employment checks made on staff.
- Inspectors talked to pupils, both formally and informally, including at lunch and breaktimes. They also talked to parents at the start of the day and took into account 10 responses to Parent View when making their judgements.
- Inspectors undertook a variety of activities to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards, including a check of the premises.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Bragg

Ofsted Inspector

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