

St Martin's School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	302/6077
Unique Reference Number (URN)	101383
Inspection number	386833
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

St Martin's School is a co-educational independent school situated in Mill Hill, north London. The school originally opened in the 1920s and was acquired by the current proprietor 15 years ago. The proprietor is also the headteacher. The school is housed in an extended detached house and admits pupils aged from three to eleven years. There are currently 108 full-time pupils on roll and a further 19 that attend on a part-time basis. The school operates an Early Years Foundation Stage for children in the pre-school and Reception classes. No children are in receipt of government funding. Pupils attending the school come from differing ethnic backgrounds. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

The school seeks to provide an excellent, academic education together with a stimulating, creative and broad curriculum. The school aims to develop each child as an individual and encourages children to develop mutual understanding and respect, and to instil a sense of self-worth. The school was last inspected in November 2008.

Evaluation of the school

St Martin's School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims for the academic and personal development of all pupils. Good teaching and learning, and a vibrant curriculum, form a strong partnership to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Provision and outcomes are equally good for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the overall effectiveness is good. Pupils' personal development is significantly enhanced by the outstanding provision made for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with pupils playing their part in the success of the school through their exemplary behaviour and infectious enthusiasm for learning. Arrangements for safeguarding and welfare of pupils are satisfactory but lack rigour in some aspects of child protection training. The school has responded appropriately to regulatory failures identified at the last inspection and all regulations are now met.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The good curriculum enables pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to make good progress. A strong emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and mathematical skills. However, this is not at the expense of other subjects. The curriculum is broad and good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their key skills across different subjects. The older pupils learn French, Spanish and Latin, which further develops their linguistic skills. The school is rightly proud of its musical provision and tradition. All pupils from Year 2 onwards play the recorder and over half play another musical instrument. Pupils' undoubted musical, speaking and dramatic skills are put to great effect in high-quality school productions, concerts and other offerings that receive acclaim from parents, carers, families, staff and the wider community. The school's physical education programme includes football, tennis, gymnastics and swimming. Personal, social and health education are good and provision effectively tackles issues such as bullying, healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Pupils particularly enjoy investigative and problem-solving tasks that are both challenging and demanding. However, they are correct in their assertion that not enough of these activities are provided. Pupils of all ages participate in many after-school clubs that include sport, ballet, touch-typing, art and craft, debating, drama, gardening and many other worthwhile enrichment activities. In addition, educational visits and outings to art galleries, museums, theatres, farms and outdoor activity centres all form an integral, important and enjoyable part of learning at St Martin's.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and contributes much to pupils' good academic progress. The progress of boys and girls is equally good and pupils with additional learning needs make similar rates of progress to their classmates. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used well to motivate and enthuse pupils to learn at a good rate. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and the high levels of mutual respect help to create an effective learning environment where pupils thrive. In most lessons, teachers set high academic and behavioural expectations to which pupils are very ready to respond. Learning objectives are shared with pupils, and teachers use assessments at the end of the lesson to gauge what has been learnt. In the most effective lessons, work is matched closely to the ability levels of all pupils, questioning is open-ended but incisive, and opportunities are provided for pupils to investigate, find things out for themselves and take initiative for their own learning. However, these features are not found in all lessons and there are occasions when work does not match the high-ability levels of particular pupils or tasks are too adult-led and directed.

Good procedures are in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and these demonstrate the good strides in learning that pupils make. Data show that attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. By the time pupils leave school, their good progress means that standards are well above the national average in key areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, and speaking and listening. There are also significant strengths in progress in other subjects such as music, information

and communication technology (ICT), and in pupils' historical knowledge and awareness of differing religions. Teachers carry out regular assessments in different areas of the curriculum and generally use the information well to guide and inform future planning. The outcomes of assessments are shared with pupils. Older pupils analyse these assessments and set their own targets for improvement. Pupils show a very good understanding of what they achieve well at and about what they must do to improve, and this makes an important contribution to the good progress made. Teachers mark pupils' work on a regular basis and often provide comments that clearly state what pupils need to improve to achieve at a higher level. Discussions with pupils indicate that they value these comments and readily take them on board.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. St Martin's is a school where the individuality of pupils is both recognised and celebrated. Pupils behave in an outstanding manner and there is a tangible sense of pupils caring and looking out for one another. Older pupils show great maturity in their dealings with younger children and provide excellent role models. Pupils are extremely courteous and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. They show a thirst for new knowledge and learning, and a keen desire to do well. Their love of school and learning is reflected in the high attendance rates. From an early age, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage show a readiness to work with and support one another, and to readily share resources. By the time that pupils leave school, they have an excellent understanding of right and wrong, and demonstrate a strong sense of justice and fair play. Pupils have a good knowledge of public institutions; for example, their knowledge of the electoral system was enhanced by writing manifestos for their own election at the same time as the General Election.

Pupils raise significant amounts of money for a range of different charities, and show a deep and genuine empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. The school has house captains and prefects. Many pupils carry out monitorial roles. The leader of the school council attends staff meetings to convey the views of pupils, and the school council has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in playground activities and resources, and break-time snacks. Pupils have a voice that is listened to and respected. The school recognises that even more could be done to tap into pupils' readiness to take on responsibility and initiative in contributing to the life of the school. Pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of different faiths, cultures and traditions. Much of this is acquired through visits to churches, temples, synagogues and through visitors to the school who have different faiths. Pupils show high levels of respect and understanding for others' beliefs and values and this is reflected in the harmony that permeates the school. Much is also done to promote pupils' cultural development through music, visits to theatres and art galleries, and in developing a strong awareness of the wider world in which they live. All these factors help to ensure that pupils leave the school as very well-rounded individuals who are ready to face future challenges.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. The procedures for child protection are not as robust as they should be. The school's designated child protection officer has undertaken the appropriate level of training but it has not been refreshed within the last two years. The officer is now booked on an appropriate training course. Discussions with the officer indicate a thorough and detailed knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters, and there is clear evidence that safeguarding of pupils is given a high priority. Good-quality policies are in place to promote good behaviour and to tackle any instances of bullying. The effectiveness of these policies is reflected in pupils' outstanding behaviour and pupils' assertion that 'bullying has never been a problem during our lifetime at this school'. Pupils state that the school is an extremely safe place to learn and that there is always someone to talk to about, '.... any worries or concerns whatsoever!' Pupils have a very good awareness of what is needed to follow a healthy lifestyle and to keep safe; appropriate risk assessments are carried out for visits out of school. There are an adequate number of trained first aiders on site and policies relating to first aid and medicines are followed appropriately by all staff. Fire risk assessments have been carried out and any identified areas for improvement have been addressed. Routine checks and fire drills are undertaken and recorded on required aspects of fire safety. School policies are reviewed on a regular basis. The school has an accessibility plan which meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on the suitability of staff and the proprietor are completed appropriately to ensure the safe recruitment of personnel. Details of all checks are recorded in a suitable single register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school premises provide a safe and effective environment for learning. The school has reorganised available space in the classroom and outside to make an environment that is more conducive to effective learning and for providing enjoyable break-times where pupils can take part in both physical and more relaxing activities. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school has a designated information and communication technology suite and library which are used well to support and enhance learning. The school makes good use of a local swimming pool and sports facilities in a nearby school to extend the opportunities for pupils in physical education. Appropriate facilities are provided for those who are ill and the school has recently been awarded a five-star rating by the local authority for its hygiene standards in food preparation and facilities.

Provision of information

The school provides, and makes available, all of the required information for parents and carers in the school prospectus and on its website. Parents and carers are regularly notified of the availability of all the required policies and how they can access them. Information relating to the progress of children is good. Parents and carers receive three reports a year outlining the attainment of their children and the progress they are making.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's arrangements for the management of any complaints meet regulatory requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because outcomes, provision, and leadership and management are all good. The curriculum covers all of the six areas of learning with a strong emphasis given to the early development of children's reading, and phonics (the sounds that letters make) and mathematical skills. Teaching is good and enables children to acquire key skills swiftly, to make good progress from their starting points, and helps children to keep themselves safe and healthy. Adults are effective at tracking children's progress and they use ongoing assessment well to plan daily activities and to identify the next steps in children's learning. There are, however, times when children are not provided with enough opportunities to be independent in their learning or to find things out for themselves and satisfy their natural curiosity. This is because learning is too adult-led at times and opportunities to further challenge children are sometimes missed. Nonetheless, children are very enthusiastic, confident and eager learners who behave extremely well and demonstrate high levels of concentration and perseverance. Good leadership ensures that the welfare of children is given a high priority and that risk assessments are carried out to ensure that children are safe. Teachers know each child and their families very well, and create a welcoming atmosphere that enables all children to settle quickly into school routines. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a good awareness of the strengths and areas for development in provision. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively. Very good relationships have been established with parents and carers, and a strong partnership between home and school adds to the quality of children's learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure that more opportunities are consistently provided for pupils of all ages, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to develop a greater independence in their own learning by
 - striking a better balance between adult-led and child-led activities
 - providing more opportunities for practical, investigative and problem-solving activities.
- Ensure that activities and tasks that are set for pupils of all ages, including Early Years Foundation Stage children, are consistently challenging, particularly for the most able.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
--	--	--	---	--

The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	1920s		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 58	Girls: 50	Total: 108
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 9	Total: 19
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,069		
Address of school	St Martin's School 22 Goodwyn Avenue Mill Hill London NW7 3RG		
Telephone number	020 8959 1965		
Email address	info@stmartinsmillhill.co.uk		
Headteacher	Angela Wilson		
Proprietor	Angela Wilson		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

21 November 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Martin's School, Mill Hill, London, NW7 3RG

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We greatly appreciated the opportunities to talk to you and a special thanks to the Year 5 and 6 pupils who met with me to discuss their views. It was good to hear how much you like school and all the activities that are on offer, both during and after the school day. It was also good to hear how safe you feel in school and that bullying is not an issue.

St Martin's provides you with a good quality of education. The curriculum is fun and exciting with lots of opportunities to play musical instruments, learn foreign languages and visit many places of interest. The good teaching provided by your teachers helps to make sure that you make good progress and reach high standards by the time that you leave school. The school is good at helping you lead healthy lifestyles and keeping you safe. The way in which the school helps you to learn about other faiths and cultures is outstanding. There is another strength of the school that I have not mentioned yet and that is you - the pupils! We thought that your behaviour and enthusiasm for learning were outstanding. You are excellent ambassadors for your school. Well done!

Even schools that provide a good quality of education can improve. We have asked the headteacher and staff to ensure that all lessons are challenging and get you thinking. We also agree with you that, at times, more opportunities could be provided for you to take part in practical, investigative activities where you can find things out for yourselves and develop into highly successful independent learners. We know that you will all want to play your part in continuing to make St Martin's a success by working as hard and behaving as well as you do now. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Newell
Lead inspector