

St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls

155 Tulse Hill, London. SW2 3UP

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders are taking an increasingly active role in improving the school.
- The governors are successful in holding senior leaders to account. They ensure that arrangements to keep students safe and secure, meet requirements.
- The broad and balanced curriculum, as well as the excellent provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are major strengths.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students are typically courteous, respectful, mature and articulate. All groups of students understand what constitutes unsafe situations and are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Teaching is good and improving. Teachers have high expectations of students and enjoy positive and supportive relationships. There is a very good atmosphere for learning and students are keen to do well. Students have high aspirations for their futures.
- All students achieve well and enjoy their learning. Disadvantaged students, disabled students or those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make particularly good progress. The school's Christian ethos promotes equal opportunities very well.
- The sixth form is good. Leadership is strong; students achieve well and have high aspirations for their future. They aspire to attend good universities and have well-considered career plans. Teachers actively encourage students to develop and extend their research and study skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the school has a very good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, school planning is not sufficiently focused. School and department plans say too little about improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Teachers do not always provide enough challenge to enable the most able students to achieve the highest grades.
- The quality of teachers' feedback to students is too variable. It does not always provide them with clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Over time, there has been some variation in students' attainment and progress. Examination results across subjects over time are not yet consistent enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, three jointly with the headteacher and the senior team. They also attended two assemblies and undertook learning walks around the school. They looked carefully at a wide range of students' written work focussing on attainment, progress and the quality of marking and feedback.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the librarian and other staff. Inspectors also held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and the sixth form as well as a group of Year 11 more able students. Discussions also took place with students informally in lessons and during break times.
- Inspectors analysed documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, records of lesson observations and safeguarding documentation. They also looked at records of incidents and files showing the support provided for students who are most in need.
- They took account of 64 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also received 34 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne-Marie Brister	Additional Inspector
Joanne Stewart	Additional Inspector
Jason Wye	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized 11 to 18 girls' school situated in Tulse Hill. The sixth form admits a small number of boys.
- The large majority of students are from Caribbean and African heritages, with smaller numbers being from other Black and other mixed backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, and those who speak English as an additional language, is well above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. This additional government funding is used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium is similar to the national average.
- The school converted to become an independent academy in September 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The last Section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in December 2012 and rated the school as outstanding.
- No students are educated elsewhere and no students were entered early for their GCSE examinations.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The school also meets the minimum standards for performance in the sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a written school plan which is more sharply focused on improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Raise achievement still further by:
 - reducing the variability of students' achievement across all subjects through rigorous monitoring and early intervention
 - ensuring that the work for the most able students is set at the right level so that they achieve the highest examination grades
 - checking that new marking and feedback procedures are adopted by all staff so that students are helped even more successfully to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors, led by the headteacher, have established a culture of ambition, commitment, and determination. They have a very clear vision to ensure that all students realise their full potential.
- Senior leaders have a very accurate view of the work needed to improve. The school's judgements on the quality of its work are robust, if slightly generous.
- Middle leaders are increasingly clear about their roles and responsibilities. They have a comprehensive understanding of what they need to do to improve further.
- The school has rigorous systems for reviewing the performance of teachers, to tackle underperformance and to reward those who teach effectively when students achieve well.
- Written school and department plans do not say enough about improving teaching and raising achievement. Actions identified are not sufficiently comprehensive or consistent.
- The quality of teaching has improved and the sharing of good practice is a regular feature of staff training and development. During joint lesson observations, senior leaders were accurate in their judgements and clear about what needed to be done to improve.
- The school has established an inclusive and supportive culture which effectively promotes equality of opportunity for all. Extra-curricular and enrichment activities offer considerable support to the quality of the curriculum.
- There is good provision for students who are most in need. They are well supported in the nurture groups providing extra English and mathematics tuition.
- Across the school, students' literacy skills are very well supported so that students make excellent progress. In particular, the school library did much to encourage students' reading skills. The development of students' mathematical skills is less evident in other subject areas.
- The quality of advice and guidance, including career guidance, is particularly strong and impacts well on students' aspirations.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is excellent. Students appreciate the moral and cultural framework which the school provides. They are positive about the school's strong intervention in issues concerning gangland culture in communities outside the school.
- Students take part in a range of activities that enhance their social skills. They are at ease in speaking with others from different religious, ethnic and social and economic backgrounds, in a confident, positive and supportive way. They are sensitive to the needs of others irrespective of their background and beliefs.
- A very large majority of parents who responded to the online survey said they would recommend the school and most felt that the school was well led and managed.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements. The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All staff are committed to students' safety, security, welfare and well-being.
- The local authority provides regular and effective support for the school through regular reports and feedback to governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, supported through regular updates, visits and feedback.
 - Governors have a very accurate view about the school's performance. They know how examination results compare with national averages and understand how much progress students are making.
 - They have a detailed awareness of the quality of teaching. They challenge leaders to ensure that arrangements for setting targets for staff are robust so any increases in salary are fully merited.
 - Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and that it is effective in helping disadvantaged students to close the gap between their achievement and that of other students.
 - As a group, governors challenge leaders as appropriate and know where improvements are still necessary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are keen to learn, and cooperate well with teachers and classroom assistants. Behaviour around school at break and lunchtimes, and when moving from lesson to lesson, is courteous and well ordered.
- Evidence strongly suggests that the excellent behaviour observed during the inspection is typical of the daily life and operation of the school.
- Students are extremely respectful and mature as a result of the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Reported incidents of bullying and racism are low. Students fully understand the consequences of their behaviour.
- Most lessons proceed uninterrupted, with students arriving punctually. Students respond very well to staff instructions and to the systems for behaviour management. Teachers apply these consistently so that students know where they stand.
- The school uses exclusion very rarely and repeat exclusions are unusual. Rates of exclusion have fallen to below average for secondary schools and significantly below for the different groups represented in the school.
- Leaders pursue any absence with vigour and students respond positively. As a result, all groups of students, including the disadvantaged, have very high rates of attendance. Punctuality to school and to lessons is similarly strong so that little learning time is ever lost.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All groups of students understand how to keep themselves safe and know about potential risks to their welfare. Support for students' safety, welfare and well-being is very strong.
- Students say that they feel safe and secure in school and appreciate the levels of support that are available to them.
- The school carries out thorough risk assessments for school trips and has effective arrangements for supporting e-safety.
- Students are aware of the different types of bullying, including those involving social media, and say that instances of bullying in school are rare.
- The school checks visitors, and only known speakers, who have been carefully vetted, are invited to contribute to assemblies.
- Staff are aware of the needs of different students and there are effective strategies in place to support their specific needs. Students comment positively about the supportive and caring ethos of the school.
- A very large majority of parents who responded to the online survey said that students were well cared for and well looked after.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Teachers have high expectations of their students. Subject knowledge is strong and teachers plan work that engages most students very well. Challenge for the most able students is less apparent.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. All groups benefit from teachers who have a very good awareness of their particular needs. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to students' good progress.
- Teaching is particularly successful in developing students' self-confidence in their ability to study and learn. There are many instances of students working cooperatively and demonstrating excellent attitudes to learning.
- Students are very positive about the quality of teaching which they receive. They appreciate the extra time that teachers give them outside of lessons so that they are able to understand work and make good progress.
- Marking is regular but the quality of teachers' feedback on students' work is variable across and within subjects. All students receive valuable verbal feedback. However, written feedback is less clear in guiding students to improve their work and reach the higher grades.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment similar to national averages. The proportion of students achieving five good quality GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has improved year on year.
- In 2014 this figure rose from 63 per cent to 69 per cent, representing a significant improvement on the 2013 results and being significantly above the 2013 national average. On the basis of students' starting points, this represents good progress.
- Students' progress in English was significantly higher than the national average, especially for the most able students. Students' progress in mathematics is good but not as good as in English.
- The most able students are still not yet making the highest rates of progress. This is confirmed by the proportion of students achieving the higher A* to A grades in external examinations. Unvalidated school information indicates that this shortfall has now been addressed.
- Students currently in the school continue to make good progress. Reliable data seen during the inspection indicate that the variation between subjects is reducing and progress across subjects is speeding up for the current Year 11.
- Current Year 11 students are making good progress across all subjects and the gap between students' progress in English and mathematics is narrowing. Previous underperformance in science and history has been rigorously addressed through staff changes and a greater focus on teaching.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs and all other groups is similar to that of their peers. Students in receipt of Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding also make similar progress to their peers as a result of the school's focus on basic skills.
- The gap between the attainment at GCSE in English and mathematics of disadvantaged students and other students is negligible. The gap for students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was much smaller in 2014 than 2013.
- The progress of disadvantaged students and their peers is similar. Disadvantaged students are making better progress than other disadvantaged students nationally.

The sixth form provision is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. The recently appointed head of sixth form is having a strong impact on the direction of the sixth form. More students are staying after their GCSE courses and retention rates into the sixth form and between Years 12 and 13 are well above national averages. The sixth form is now attracting an increasing number of students from other schools.
- The carefully planned curriculum ensures that students follow courses that are matched to their needs and abilities. Information, advice and guidance on suitable careers and university choices are effective.
- Information is used very well to track students' progress and ensure that intervention and support are provided where necessary. Good plans are in place to ensure that students are thoroughly prepared for entry to employment, training and further or higher education.
- Behaviour is good and students are well motivated in lessons to learn. They demonstrate a passion for their chosen subjects. Students play an active role in the school as ambassadors and role models for younger students. Students feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of students and encourage them to develop and extend their thinking, research and independent learning skills. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and relationships supportive and encouraging. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is lower than that seen nationally so progress is good, especially on the AS and work-related courses. Students have high aspirations for their future and an increasing proportion of students go to university, including highly successful universities.
- Disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Good provision is made for resit candidates and all students are expected to resit their GCSE English and mathematics examinations until they achieve at least a grade C.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137966
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	449415

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	901
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Edmonson
Headteacher	Lesley Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
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