

St Martin's School

22 Goodwyn Avenue, Mill Hill, London NW7 3RG

Inspection dates

3–5 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. As a result, this is a good and improving school.
- The headteacher and the proprietor are ambitious for all pupils and work together effectively. They have successfully brought about rapid improvements over a short time.
- The proprietor and the board of directors provide senior leaders with effective support and scrutiny. Working with the headteacher, they ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Staff are highly committed and are proud to work at the school. Their morale is high.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe at school. Their personal development and welfare are exceptional.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities and visits. The curriculum ensures that pupils are engaged in their learning and achieve well.
- Staff know pupils very well and so meet their specific needs. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. As a result, pupils make generally good progress across the year groups in all subjects. Pupils are prepared very well for their next stage of education.
- Parents are extremely positive about all aspects of the school. Parents say that their children are safe and well cared for, and achieve well.
- Children in the early years make good progress and are prepared well for Year 1. However, assessment lacks rigour so that some children, particularly the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable. The outdoor area is not fully utilised to support and extend children's learning.
- Pupils do not routinely write at length in English and other subjects to improve their writing skills.
- Some subject leaders are new to their positions and have yet to develop fully their skills in checking and improving the quality of teaching.

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 quality of leadership and management by strengthening the role of subject leaders so that they have an impact on improving the quality of teaching further.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing by extending opportunities for pupils to improve their writing in English and other subjects.
- Improve the early years provision by:
 - improving assessment systems so that children, including the most able, receive the right level of challenge to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable
 - providing greater opportunities for children to use the outdoor area to support and extend their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school and has created a culture of high expectations for pupils and staff that encourages them to do their very best. As a result, both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good and improving.
- The proprietor works closely with the headteacher and knows the school's strengths and areas for development well. They are clear about the improvements required to drive the school forward in order for it to become outstanding. The proprietor and the headteacher share their vision for the school and have made rapid and significant changes in the first year of their tenure. As a result, all of the independent school standards are met and the school continues to improve.
- The headteacher quite rightly has focused on improving pupils' outcomes. With the full support of the proprietor, the headteacher has taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching so that it is good and improving.
- Staff receive good support and training to help them improve their classroom practice. The performance management system is robust and is supporting improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. There is a strong culture of respect, support and tolerance, with positive relationships between leaders, staff and pupils. The morale among the staff is high.
- The proprietor and the board of directors provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher to ensure that any weaknesses are addressed and the school continues to improve. The school has plans in place to appoint additional governors to strengthen its work.
- Staff know individual pupils well and use assessment information effectively to identify those pupils who are falling behind. These pupils are provided with additional, good-quality support to enable them to make good progress.
- The special educational needs leader works closely with teachers to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported and make good progress. There is strong support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind to ensure that they achieve well. In this way, leaders ensure that they actively promote equality of opportunity for all.
- The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced, and promotes the school's values of 'resilience', 'charity' and 'self-sacrifice' well. The curriculum engages and motivates pupils, and challenges them so that they make good progress across all subjects. The curriculum is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs, trips and sporting events. Pupils enjoy learning French and Latin and make good progress in these subjects. Pupils' learning and opportunities in art and music are strengths of the school. Pupils learn about different artists and play a range of musical instruments. Pupils love singing and participate in concerts.
- Leaders actively promote British values. Pupils know about democracy, the rule of law and elections. Their understanding was deepened by a visit to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. The library has an attractive set of books related to British values, which pupils enjoy reading. The elected school council provides an opportunity for pupils to

express and debate their views and opinions. Pupils are taught well about respect, tolerance and responsibility. Pupils have respect for diversity and know about different cultures and faiths represented in Britain as well as people with protected characteristics. The school is very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. Leaders know of the urgency to develop the leadership skills of new subject leaders so that they have a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Staff are very supportive of the school's leadership and are of the view that the school has markedly improved since the previous inspection.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are supportive of the school's leadership and agree that this is a much-improved school since the previous inspection. All parents stated that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- The school has reviewed its safeguarding policies and procedures. It has updated the school's policy on safeguarding, which takes into account current government requirements. The safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website.

Governance of the school

- The responsibilities for governance are fulfilled by the proprietor and board of directors. They know the school well and provide the senior leadership team with good support and challenge. They are highly ambitious for pupils.
- The proprietor, who is also one of the designated safeguarding leads, is in the school every day and works closely with the headteacher. The proprietor meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss the impact of the actions identified in the school improvement plan. In this way, the headteacher is held to account for the work he does.
- The proprietor, the board of directors and an external educational consultant carry out the headteacher's appraisal. They set challenging targets, including improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- The proprietor and the board of directors attend training to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills to perform their role effectively. They commission audits, for example on safeguarding and on teaching and learning, to bring about improvements.
- The proprietor and the board of directors work with leaders to ensure that safeguarding is effective and that pupils are always safe in school. The proprietor has good links with parents and listens and responds to any concerns they have.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy, which meets the current government requirements. Records on safeguarding are detailed and of high quality.
- Comprehensive risk assessments are in place relating to school visits, trips and safety in the school.
- Staff have received training, including regular updates, on safeguarding and child

protection procedures. They understand the implications of their training for their roles in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff are extremely vigilant in ensuring that pupils are kept safe, well looked after and happy in the school.

- Leaders ensure that there are effective links with external agencies, including the local authority, to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders ensure that the staff recruitment arrangements are secure and fit for purpose.
- All parents who responded to Parent View and held discussions with the inspectors stated that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher and the proprietor have been relentless in ensuring high standards of teaching. They have successfully created a strong learning culture across the school. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and improving.
- There are positive working relationships and strong mutual respect between staff and pupils. Teachers have a very secure understanding of individual pupils' backgrounds and their needs. This, together with the effective use of assessment information, enables teachers to plan activities which engage pupils and support their good progress. Sometimes, tasks do not stimulate pupils to write at length and extend their writing skills.
- Teachers and teaching assistants usually make good use of questioning to test pupils' understanding and extend their thinking, thereby engaging and challenging pupils, including the most able. However, on some occasions, questioning is not probing enough to extend pupils to the full.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment and feedback policy well. This involves checking pupils' work regularly and giving them good advice on how to improve it. Pupils are generally keen to respond to teachers' advice and reflect on their learning to improve their work.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher used thorough subject knowledge to challenge pupils and to ensure that they made strong progress with their understanding of how to multiply and divide by a decimal number.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and provide effective support to pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils benefit greatly from being taught by specialist teachers, for example in French, Latin and music. As a result, they make strong progress in these subjects. Pupils in Year 6 were keen to show their art work produced using various techniques, including collage, pastels and water colours. Pupils know in detail about the work of artists, including Van Gogh, Monet and Salvador Dali.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and helps pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, to read unfamiliar or difficult words. Pupils enjoy reading and they have access to a range of books to capture their interest.
- Pupils receive regular and challenging homework in line with the school's policy. This

helps pupils to consolidate their learning. All parents who responded to Parent View stated that their child is taught well and receives appropriate homework for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are self-confident, apply themselves well and have excellent attitudes to their work. This has a positive impact on the progress they make.
- Staff know each pupil well and have a very strong focus on promoting pupils' welfare, well-being and mental health. Pupils are confident that staff would take swift and appropriate action to resolve any problems or concerns. Pupils can post notes into a 'worry box' that is checked weekly by the headteacher who makes sure that pupils receive the help they need.
- Pupils belong to one of three houses and the house system helps them to work together and support each other. For example, older pupils help younger pupils when lining up after breaktimes and by reading with them.
- Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities, including those of head boy and head girl, house captains, sport captains and 'digital leaders' – information technology monitors. These roles help to develop their confidence and prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Pupils are caring and empathetic, and raise funds for many different charities.
- Pupils enjoy learning, are proud of their school and talk positively about their experiences. One pupil said, 'We are like a big family. We are all connected.'
- The school has good links with external agencies to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high-quality care and support so that they thrive and achieve well.
- Leaders ensure that risk assessments are carried out diligently and that effective action is taken to reduce any potential risks within the premises and during off-site visits. This ensures that pupils are kept safe.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are taught well, including in assemblies, about unsafe situations and how to stay safe, including when working online, fire and road safety. Pupils know how to lead healthy lives and have good opportunities to develop their physical fitness through sporting activities.
- Pupils show respect for diversity and learn about other faiths, beliefs and cultures in, for example, religious education lessons and assemblies. Pupils said that they feel safe and that incidents of bullying, racism, homophobia or discrimination are very rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and courteous. Pupils throughout the school behave exceptionally well in lessons, during lunchtime and around the school.

- Poor behaviour is very rare, as shown by the detailed records that leaders keep on pupils' behaviour. Pupils know the behaviour policy, which emphasises rewards but also sets out sanctions. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection.
- The attendance of pupils is above the national average and they are punctual to lessons. Rates of persistent absence are very low.
- All parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. All staff responding to the staff survey also agree.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Consistently good teaching over time ensures that pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics, across the year groups.
- The school's own assessment records, work in pupils' books and displays on walls show that pupils make good progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar good progress to their classmates. These pupils particularly benefit from staff's emphasis on developing their vocabulary and language skills with rich opportunities for speaking and listening.
- Pupils love reading and their reading records show that they read widely and often. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to read difficult or unfamiliar words. Older pupils enjoy reading to younger pupils to help them improve their reading.
- Staff provide a high level of individual care and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. As a result, they make good progress.
- The most able pupils make good progress. Staff ensure that the planned activities are consistently challenging and engaging so that pupils extend their thinking.
- Pupils write for different purposes using a range of colourful language and vocabulary. However, they do not routinely write at length and across different subjects to improve their writing skills.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong across the school. Pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge and the challenging work they are set. Pupils are able to solve different mathematical problems using a range of methods and calculation skills.
- Pupils are prepared very well for their next stage of education. In 2016, all pupils who were entered for the 11+ examination passed and gained entry to selective schools of their choice, with some pupils gaining scholarships.
- All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start in the early years with skills and abilities which are typical for their age. By the time they leave Reception, they have made good progress from their different starting points in all areas of learning. In 2017, all children achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

- Children benefit from good teaching, care and support because staff know individual children well and plan suitable learning activities. Those children who are falling behind with their learning are quickly identified for additional support to ensure that they make good progress.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high-quality individual support and make good progress.
- Children who speak English as an additional language receive good support to develop and improve their language skills through questioning and opportunities to speak and listen. Overall, the children's language and literacy skills are well developed and they make good progress.
- Children's behaviour is consistently good and they have strong attitudes to their learning. Children follow instructions well, and interact and collaborate happily with each other. They enjoy their learning and are curious about their environment. In a Nursery class, for example, children expressed much delight when they were digging for 'treasure' and using a magnifying glass in their search. One child said, 'Look, that's gone really big!'
- The curriculum provides children with a broad range of interesting and engaging experiences. For example, children in the Reception class were thoroughly engrossed in a music lesson and made movements that picked up the mood of the music played by the teacher on the piano. The children then went on to compare the different sounds of percussion instruments.
- The quality of teaching is good and staff plan activities to interest and motivate children. The teaching of phonics is also good and children enjoy learning about the sounds letters make to read simple words.
- Early years staff have strong links with parents, which help children to settle quickly into routines when they join the school. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through regular information and meetings. Parents also have access to an online programme where they can see for themselves how well their child is learning, and contribute to the assessment process.
- As a result of strong support from the headteacher, improvements have been made to the early years provision and leadership. The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders know the strengths of the early years provision and the actions required to bring about further developments. For example, leaders know that the assessment system to monitor the progress of different groups of children from their starting points lacks rigour.
- Occasionally, the most able children are not sufficiently challenged and they do the same activities as other children. This slows their progress. For example, in a Nursery class, a counting activity did not go beyond the number 10 when there were a few children who could have easily counted beyond 10.
- Sometimes, adults do not use the outdoor area consistently well to extend children's knowledge and understanding.
- Children are supervised and looked after well by very caring staff. Staff are fully trained to keep children safe. Leaders and staff ensure that safeguarding is effective. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.
- The school meets the independent school standards in relation to the early years

provision.

School details

Unique reference number	101383
DfE registration number	302/6077
Inspection number	10035780

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	82
Number of part-time pupils	8
Proprietor	Harwil Education Limited
Chair	Joanna Wilson
Headteacher	Jason Walak
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,650
Telephone number	020 8959 1965
Website	www.stmartinsmillhill.co.uk
Email address	info@stmartinsmillhill.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–10 July 2015

Information about this school

- St Martin's is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls aged three to 11 and is registered to accept up to 120 pupils.
- It has operated since the 1920s, and is accommodated in an extended, detached house in Mill Hill, in the London Borough of Barnet.
- The school has been run by Harwil Education Limited since 1996. The new chair of the proprietorial board took over in December 2016.
- The headteacher was appointed in December 2016. There have been a number of changes to staffing since the previous inspection. A few of the subject leaders are also

new to their posts.

- The school aims to 'provide a rich broad and challenging curriculum that puts the child at the heart of their learning and prepares them for their digital futures'.
- There are currently 82 pupils on roll. The school prepares pupils for entrance examinations to grammar schools and independent secondary schools.
- There are no disadvantaged pupils. There are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. About one tenth of the school population have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school population reflects the ethnic diversity of the local community.
- The previous inspection in July 2016 was the school's first progress monitoring visit to check how well the school was meeting the unmet standards identified at the time of the previous full standard inspection in July 2015.
- The early years consists of a Nursery class and a Reception class. All children in the Reception attend full time. Parents have an option to send their children either part time or full time to the Nursery.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school in all year groups, including in the early years. These were all joint observations with either the headteacher or the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspectors held meetings with pupils in key stages 1 and 2 about their learning and views about the school. The inspectors also listened to Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read and discussed their reading with them.
- The inspectors scrutinised books and the school's own information on the progress pupils make. Inspectors checked the single central register of pre-employment checks on staff, and looked at pupils' attendance and behaviour records. They also examined documents and policies in relation to the curriculum, safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the proprietor, senior leaders and parents.
- There were 44 responses to Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to 20 parents during the inspection. Inspectors considered 15 responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tim McLoughlin

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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