

St Mary's Independent School

57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 4DJ

Inspection dates

13–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
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 school that requires improvement

- Over time, leaders and governors have thought that aspects of the school were better than they are. Consequently, they have not tackled improvements with enough urgency to ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have not ensured that checks on the school's premises are carried out systematically, or that weaknesses are quickly addressed.
- The identification of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities across the school is in its infancy. Because of this, leaders are not yet able to articulate the impact that the school has on these pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers do not consistently use their knowledge of individual pupils to plan activities that help pupils to make rapid progress, particularly in mathematics. As a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Recently, governors have rightly focused on improving the health and safety arrangements across the school. However, they do not monitor all aspects of the school's work effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has identified the correct priorities to improve the school and is working hard to address them. She has a clear vision and ambition for staff and pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in the school.
- The quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years, is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and enables pupils to make good progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils are polite, well mannered and have exemplary attitudes to learning. All pupils take pride in their work and their school.
- Pupils' attainment is strong, particularly in humanities and science. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils are suitably equipped for life in modern Britain. They are developing a good understanding of those values shared with other faiths and cultures.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'). The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership, management and governance by:
 - improving systems and procedures for monitoring the work of the school
 - holding all staff to account to ensure that they carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively
 - refining the identification process for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and evaluating the impact of provision on pupils' outcomes.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ironing out any inconsistencies in teaching across the school, particularly in mathematics.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards:
 - Ensure that the relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
 - Ensure that the proprietor complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
 - Ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
 - Ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
 - Ensure that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which is available for inspection on the school premises, and which provides a written record of the resolution and the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (paragraph 33(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii)).
 - Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)).
 - Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not been meticulous enough in checking that the school premises meet the independent school standards. Governors have taken the information that they have been provided with by leaders at face value. Consequently, health and safety requirements have not been met in relation to the maintenance of electrical equipment and fire safety regulations.
- At the start of the inspection, some important policies and documents did not reflect the statutory requirements. However, leaders ensured that these were all compliant by the end of the inspection.
- The newly appointed headteacher has correctly identified the school's priorities and is working hard to address any areas for improvement. She is determined to provide a rich and diverse experience for pupils which enables them to learn well and grow as individuals.
- The leadership structure of the school has changed significantly since the last inspection. A one-school approach to leadership has ensured that there is a continuity between the preparatory and senior schools in terms of standards and staff expectations. As a result, pupils' transition between the different phases of the school is smooth.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum across the school to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study subjects in sufficient depth. The newly revised curriculum meets the needs of pupils exceptionally well and balances academic learning with a range of wider experiences. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school.
- Leaders systematically monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. As a result, leaders are well aware of the strengths and relative weaknesses in teaching, and provide suitable training to improve the quality of teaching further.
- Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school feel well supported by leaders. Staff told inspectors that they feel valued and invested in by the school.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school offers. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to participate in music festivals, sporting events and a range of other activities. Pupils appreciate this and enjoy the opportunity to compete with pupils from other schools.
- The school's Christian ethos is at the centre of leaders' work. Leaders and governors ensure that staff place the aspirations, needs and well-being of pupils at the heart of what they do. Parents and carers appreciate this, and of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, all would recommend the school.

Governance

- Governors have had an overly optimistic view of certain aspects of the school's work since the last inspection. This is because governors take leaders' views at face value and do not ensure that the information they receive is accurate. Consequently, governors have not challenged leaders strongly enough or held them tightly to account.

- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards and of the current Ofsted inspection framework. As a result, they have not fully engaged in the monitoring of all aspects of the school's work.
- Recently, the governing body has become aware of its weaknesses and has worked hard, alongside the headteacher, to address the health and safety issues across the school. A robust plan for improvement is in place to address the outstanding health and safety concerns.
- The governor responsible for safeguarding has ensured that all governors are aware of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. She visits the school to check that identified actions for improvement are completed and that safer recruitment procedures are followed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive thorough training on a broad range of safeguarding topics, including the preventing of radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Staff are constantly alert to any possible signs that may suggest a pupil is at risk of harm.
- Safeguarding is regularly discussed in staff meetings, and the process for reporting any concerns is clear and easy to follow. Referrals made to external agencies are dealt with in a timely manner and ensure that pupils are kept safe both inside and outside of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They know how to challenge pupils well and make learning interesting for pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy lessons and engage positively in learning tasks.
- Teachers use questioning well to deepen pupils' knowledge and to check their understanding. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were asked to justify the method they had chosen to solve a problem.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and know their pupils well. Strong relationships between staff and pupils encourage pupils to participate in a range of activities that help them to learn.
- In all lessons seen, pupils were fully committed to their learning. They are punctual to lessons and settle to work quickly. This is due to the established learning routines that have been instilled by teachers.
- Teachers regularly make checks on pupils' progress through frequent assessments. There are examples of effective feedback from teachers, in line with the school's expectations, across the school. In these instances, pupils clearly know what they need to do to improve and act on the feedback they receive. This contributes positively to the progress they make. For example, pupils appreciate the feedback that they receive in history, which supports their understanding of historical contexts.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and support pupils' learning well. They often

work with a range of pupils, dependent on the pupils' needs and the activity set. Pupils respond well to this support and the targeted questioning that teaching assistants use to move their learning on.

- Where teaching leads to strong progress, it takes close account of what pupils already know and understand. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently provide pupils with the opportunity to either consolidate their knowledge or to develop their skills. Because of this, pupils sometimes complete work that is either too easy or too challenging for them. This is most evident in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. This is because leaders have not ensured that all the regulatory requirements for health and safety have been met.
- Fire safety procedures are not rigorous enough. During the inspection, a number of fire hazards were identified. Fire doors were found to be locked and electrical equipment not tested. Leaders removed all risks that placed pupils and staff at risk of harm by the end of the inspection.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the majority of parents agree. Pupils are confident about expressing their views and opinions with staff and know who to turn to if they have any worries.
- Pupils receive impartial and useful careers guidance on an individual basis. Speakers from local schools and colleges, along with visiting professionals, contribute to this guidance. This equips pupils well for the next stages of their educational careers.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare, but that if it does occur, staff take appropriate action to deal with it.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' well-being, for example through physical education that promotes a healthy lifestyle and personal, social and health education where pupils learn about how to stay safe online.
- Pupils express themselves well and demonstrate resilience and self-confidence. They have a good understanding of people from different faiths, cultures and backgrounds and demonstrate respect and tolerance for others at all times.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel honoured to be part of the school and wear their uniform with pride. All pupils that inspectors spoke to were polite and welcoming.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They are punctual to lessons and eager to learn.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and value their

education. As a result, no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by poor attendance.

- The school's behaviour policy is in the process of being reviewed, taking into account the views of staff and pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's rules, and most pupils follow these continually.
- The independent school standards for this aspect of the school's work are met.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment across the school and in a range of subjects is good. External examination results show that pupils' attainment is well above the national average across the curriculum.
- The school's internal information for 2017 shows that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' progress from their starting points mirrors these strong results, particularly in reading.
- In key stage 4, pupils have the opportunity to work towards qualifications in a wide range of subjects. In 2017, all pupils achieved a minimum of five GCSEs, including in English and mathematics. School leaders have reviewed the qualifications available to pupils to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study all subjects in sufficient depth.
- Some of the strongest progress that pupils make is in humanities and science at key stages 3 and 4. Pupils make rapid progress in these subjects and this is reflected in their work and the school's internal data. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy learning in these subjects and find them fascinating.
- The development of pupils' literacy skills is a clear priority for school leaders. Pupils are given every opportunity to read across the curriculum and from an early age. Pupils read for meaning and with confidence during lessons.
- The school's assessment information is used to plan pupils' learning. This is used well and supports pupils to close any gaps in their knowledge or skills. However, in some subjects, this information is not used consistently, limiting the progress that pupils make, particularly in mathematics.
- Due to the infancy of the school's identification process of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, it is not clear exactly what impact the school has on the progress that these pupils make in relation to their peers. Leaders are aware of this and are continuing to refine this assessment process.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- As in other areas of the school, health and safety arrangements in the early years require improvement. This means that the overall effectiveness of the early years requires improvement. However, there are significant strengths in other aspects of the early years, such as leadership and management, outcomes and the quality of teaching.
- Teaching in the early years is among the strongest in the school. Children flourish in their development and settle down to well-established routines from an early age. This

supports children to feel secure and confident in their learning environment.

- Children get off to an excellent start in the Nursery class. The early years leader works closely with parents and external agencies to ease children's transition into the setting. As a result, children's first experiences of school are positive.
- Children enter Reception from the school's Nursery provision with skills and abilities that are in line with or above those that are typical for their age. Leaders track children's achievements closely and use this to plan purposeful learning activities that meet children's needs. Because of this, children's outcomes are excellent and they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children express a fascination about their learning and the world around them. The topic-based curriculum encourages children to develop their curiosity and imagination as well as their literacy and numeracy skills. Inspectors observed children writing at length about their exciting encounter with aliens.
- Effective teaching helps children to develop their knowledge of pure sounds well. This enables children to make strong progress in reading. Inspectors observed children using their phonics skills to work out the sounds of unfamiliar words accurately.
- All staff are suitably trained to check that children are well cared for and safe. They work closely with parents and external professionals to support the welfare of children, both at home and at school.

School details

Unique reference number	116567
DfE registration number	852/6003
Inspection number	10033944

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Number of part-time pupils	16
Proprietor	The Brothers of Christian Instruction
Chair	Reverend Brother Francis
Headteacher	Claire Charlemagne
Annual fees (day pupils)	Preparatory school: £7,620 Senior school: £9,900
Telephone number	02380 671267
Website	www.stmarysindependentschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@stmiss.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- St Mary's Independent School is an independent co-educational Roman Catholic school for pupils aged from three to 16 years. It is a Christian school whose mission statement is embodied in the lives and works of the De la Mennais Brothers, whose aim is 'to make Jesus better known and loved'.
- The school was founded in 1922 as a boys' school. In 1992, the school started admitting girls. The school is registered for 312 pupils. There are currently 121 on roll, including 16 in the Nursery.
- The school was first registered with the Department for Education in January 1947. The

school's last standard inspection was in February 2013, when the school was judged to provide a good standard of education.

- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing at a senior leadership level. The current headteacher is responsible for the whole school.
- The school is non-selective. It aims to nurture, inspire and support pupils to achieve.
- There is one pupil at the school with an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a number of lessons. The majority of lessons were jointly observed with the senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leadership team, the governing body and trustees.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils through informal discussions and during meetings with groups of pupils selected by inspectors.
- The views of parents were considered through informal discussions during the school day, and through the 57 responses to the Parent View online survey.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 32 members of staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire.
- A range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's own evaluation of its work, the school improvement plan, records of meetings, curriculum plans, schemes of work and records of students' achievement. Information about safeguarding arrangements was checked, as was the single central record, risk assessments and a range of policies.
- All of the education independent school standards were checked during this inspection.

Inspection team

Emma Sanderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gerard Strong

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including:
 - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils; and
 - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which:
 - 33(i) provides information for the complaints panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is
 - 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
 - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether

they are upheld).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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