

Inspection of St Martins School (3–16 Learning Community)

Moors Bank, St Martins, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7BD

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

St Martins School is a small school with a big heart. Leaders want every pupil to be 'selfless, self-assured and successful'. They aim to achieve this by offering a personalised approach where each pupil is regarded as an individual.

Pupils build trusting relationships with staff, based on mutual respect, from Nursery to Year 11. As a result of this, pupils feel valued, happy and safe. Throughout the school day, staff take every opportunity to interact positively with pupils. Mr Wilko, the school therapy dog, also lends a helping paw when he can. One pupil told inspectors, 'This school fits me as a person.'

Pupils behave extremely well. In lessons, they listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to participate in learning. At social times, pupils sit or play sensibly together, with many older pupils choosing to access the 'hub' space that houses the school library. During lesson changeovers, secondary-phase pupils move around the building sensibly and without fuss.

Some parents and carers are not confident that all bullying concerns are fully resolved. However, inspectors found that this is not the view of the pupils. When pupils do report bullying, it is always investigated, with staff taking appropriate action.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Senior leaders have high aspirations for every pupil. Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum that offers a wide range of subjects to meet these high expectations. Leaders expect that all pupils in Years 10 and 11 will study a language and a creative subject as part of their curriculum.

Leaders have carefully mapped out what knowledge and skills pupils should learn in all subjects. Leaders are ambitious with their curriculum decisions. For example, in modern foreign languages, leaders want pupils to not only learn language skills, but also to learn about the culture of different countries, such as the tradition of naming French schools after famous French authors and scientists. Although most subjects are well established, there have been recent changes to a few foundation subjects in the primary phase. These changes have yet to embed and demonstrate impact. Leaders know this and are supporting subject leaders with this work.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain subject content clearly and check pupils' understanding well in lessons. Teachers use questions skilfully to help them to spot pupils who may be stuck. This means that pupils who need help get it quickly.

Teachers use assessment well. During lessons, teachers use various methods to help pupils recall what they have learned previously. This helps pupils remember more of their learning long term.

Reading is front and centre of the curriculum. Leaders have an in-depth knowledge of what pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read know and can do. The phonics programme is well planned and delivered by staff with excellent subject knowledge. Children enjoy their phonics lessons and make good progress. As leaders and staff know the children so well, they can swiftly intervene if any children start to fall behind in their reading. All primary staff have had training in phonics, and leaders plan to extend this training for secondary-phase staff. Older pupils talk with enthusiasm about the different types of books that they love to read. They know that leaders value reading and that they will order books that pupils request for the school library. Pupils also appreciate and value the fact that the hub leader takes the time to get to know their reading likes and dislikes and will recommend books that they know pupils will enjoy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the full curriculum and are generally well catered for. In the primary phase, staff know the pupils very well and ensure that they meet their needs. In the secondary phase, information for pupils with an education, health and care plan is shared and used well. However, some departments do not make effective use of the information that they have about other pupils with SEND. There are times when these pupils could benefit from more targeted support, but this is not always put in place. This may hinder the progress that these pupils make.

Behaviour across the school is a strength. However, in some year groups, some pupils have very poor rates of attendance. This is impacting on their learning. Leaders' actions to address this issue have had some success. However, too many pupils are still persistently absent from school.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities that enrich the curriculum. These promote pupils' confidence and sense of responsibility. Pupils can take on roles such as those of sports leader, reading buddy and anti-bullying ambassador. They enjoy these roles and take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils can access a range of clubs, including for various sports, the school band, knitting and chess. They also enjoy opportunities such as the cadet programme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Leaders have carefully planned the curriculum to cover relationships and sex education, health education, different faiths and traditions, citizenship and character development. In addition, leaders also provide effective careers support and guidance. This careful planning means that pupils get helpful information when they need it. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Those responsible for governance understand their roles well. Trustees have a variety of effective systems in place for checking the quality of education. Consequently, leaders at all levels know the school very well and how it can improve further. Leaders work hard to promote staff well-being. Staff morale is generally high. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work well together to safeguard pupils. They are alert to potential issues and are clear about what they should do if they have a concern about a child. When needed, leaders work with other agencies to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable pupils. Leaders manage the recruitment of staff well.

Pupils know whom to talk to in school if they have concerns. Leaders ensure that pupils get the support and information they need to help them keep safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of real-life situations, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A significant number of pupils in some year groups are absent or persistently absent from school. This impacts on how well pupils learn and slows their progress. Leaders should continue to work closely with parents to overcome barriers to pupils' poor attendance.
- The curriculum in a few foundation subjects in the primary phase has recently been revised and is in the earlier stages of implementation. As a result of this, the impact of these changes is not yet known. Leaders should ensure that they evaluate the recent curriculum changes to ensure that these have the impact that leaders intend.
- In some secondary departments, information for pupils with SEND is not used as well as it could be. As a result of this, some pupils may not benefit from the support that they require. Leaders should ensure that all relevant information is shared in a timely and appropriate way with all staff.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143142
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10256936
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	683
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gary Turner
Head of school	Sue Lovecy
Website	www.stmartins3-16.org
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the 3–18 Education Trust. It joined in 2016.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school and other leaders.

- Inspectors met with representatives from the board of trustees and the multi-academy trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and geography. Inspection activities in these subjects included lesson visits, discussion with staff and pupils, meeting with subject leaders and work scrutiny. An inspector also observed pupils reading.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding arrangements, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also reviewed the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.
- Inspectors talked to staff about their role in keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed social times.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including additional free-text comments. They also took account of responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

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