

St Martin's School

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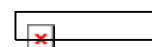
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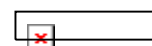
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Introduction and summary

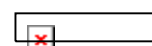


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

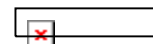


St Martin's School is a small, non-denominational, independent day school for boys and girls aged 3 to 11 years. It is located in Mill Hill in north-west London and was established in the early part of the twentieth century. The current proprietor, who is also the headteacher, acquired the school in 1996. The pupils are admitted to the school following a selection process, and leave to join either independent or state secondary schools. At the time of the inspection there were 122 pupils on roll, including seven who attend part time. Although a small proportion of the pupils live locally, most travel to the school from neighbouring boroughs. Around half the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although none is at an early stage of learning English, a small number of pupils receive extra help to improve their command of the language. Two pupils have a statement of

special educational need.

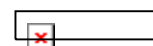
The school aims to provide '*an academic education together with a stimulating, creative and wide curriculum*', preparing its pupils for subsequent stages of their education and giving them opportunities to develop their individuality.

Summary of main findings



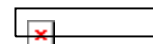
St Martin's School provides a very good quality of education for its pupils. It fulfils its declared aims, enabling the pupils to '*become confident, resourceful, enquiring and independent learners*' and to '*help them build positive relationships with other people*'. The quality of teaching is very good and is a powerful influence on the pupils' achievement. Assessment of pupils' work and their progress is thorough. The curriculum is very well planned. Links between different subjects help the pupils to understand the value and significance of their work. While a strong emphasis is given to the teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics, the school's ethos successfully promotes the pupils' personal and social development, particularly through the performing arts.

What the school does well



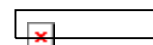
- it provides an attractive and welcoming environment for pupils and adults;
- the teaching helps the pupils learn very well and takes account of their individual needs;
- high expectations ensure that the pupils behave very well and adopt positive attitudes to work and learning;
- the curriculum is rich in opportunities and provides the pupils with worthwhile experiences within and beyond the school day; and
- an emphasis on the performing arts gives the school a distinctive character.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- ensure that policies for child protection are up-to-date and fully implemented;
- provide additional washrooms for pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2; and
- include in the information for parents and prospective parents details of the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language.

What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

Next steps

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Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- make more efficient use of the space available in the Foundation Stage in order to extend pupils' independent learning.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

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1. The quality of education provided by the school

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The quality of the curriculum

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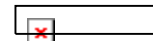
The curriculum is broad and it provides good opportunities to develop pupils' learning in all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and French. An emphasis on the performing arts further enhances the curriculum and appropriately reflects the school's aims. Singing and instrumental music tuition is available for the many pupils who wish to develop their musical abilities. Many pupils take advantage of the good range of after-school clubs. Personal, social and health education is developed successfully through daily assemblies and planned work and prepares the pupils for their next stage of schooling and later life as an adult.

Good subject policies and comprehensive schemes of work set out how each subject will be taught. These enable teachers to develop detailed medium-term and weekly plans. The plans meet the needs of all pupils effectively, including those with special educational needs, and have a positive influence on their progress. Topics link subjects together well. They make efficient use of the time available for teaching and also help to develop pupils' ability to use and apply their knowledge and understanding to new areas of learning.

Pupils in the Foundation Stage follow an appropriately planned curriculum based on national guidance. It includes work in communication, language and literacy, personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to engage in individual and group activities planned by adults but also those of their own choosing. The organisation of the curriculum enables them to play, work, investigate and explore within the

outdoor and indoor environment.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is very good and in a small number of lessons it is excellent. It is an important factor in ensuring that the pupils achieve very well. The teachers have good knowledge of the subjects in the school's curriculum and are well versed in the use of effective methods to teach key skills in English and mathematics. Specialist teachers have a strong and positive influence on the pupils' progress in information and communication technology, music and physical education. Resources and equipment are in plentiful supply, in good condition and are easily accessible. The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs helps them make good progress towards the targets set out in their individual education plans. Pupils at early stage of learning English as an additional language make steady progress and receive beneficial support. One teacher is trained in this area to provide the necessary expertise.

Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Clear objectives provide the driving force behind lessons, giving them a strong sense of purpose and instilling momentum into pupils' learning. Many successful lessons start with a reminder of what has been learned previously and the pupils' responses to questions provide the context for the introduction of new ideas or the teaching of new skills. For example, in an English lesson in Key Stage 2, the teaching helped the pupils recall poems written on a theme of 'Changes'. This was a precursor to an analysis of photographs of old people and discussions of how their experiences had changed them. In this and many other lessons, the teacher's choice of resources ignited an intense level of interest among the pupils and stretched their minds to find the right vocabulary.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and help to establish a pleasant and purposeful atmosphere in lessons, assemblies and at all times throughout the school day. Teachers have high expectations that the pupils will behave well and work hard. Pupils respond accordingly. The good range of tasks gives pupils many chances to work either individually, in pairs or in groups. The teachers allow plenty of opportunity for pupils to practise and improve their skills in reading, writing and numeracy, but time is also provided for other practical tasks, for example in mathematics, science and art. This variety of teaching methods helps the school to achieve its aim to *'encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning and to reflect on how they learn'*.

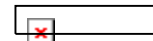
Teaching in the Foundation Stage helps the school's youngest pupils to make a good start to their schooling. The teachers' good knowledge of the curriculum and the associated areas of learning results in a well-planned programme of suitable activities. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of key skills in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. The teaching also strikes a good balance with other areas of learning, for example in creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world. The space in the classrooms, although adequate for the number of pupils, is not always used efficiently to maximise the impact of the teaching on the pupils' progress. When too many pupils are working in one area, it is difficult for them learn how to work independently or exercise choice about how to tackle the work.

The assessment of the pupils' work and progress is thorough. The school makes good use of tests and assessments and teachers keep meticulous records of the pupils' achievements. These are used to very good effect to set targets for individual pupils and to plan further work. In lessons where the teaching is excellent, assessments of previous work are integral to the planning and help to ensure that the pupils are stretched to their full potential.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Daily assemblies provide time for quiet prayer and reflection. Cross-curricular themes such as 'Emotions' and 'Moving On' offer opportunities for pupils to empathise with characters in documentaries and stories which assist them in managing significant periods in their lives. The study of major faith groups, visiting speakers from different religious groups and visits to other places of worship give the pupils further insight into different spiritual understandings and beliefs. Teachers consistently require pupils to develop self-awareness and knowledge through reflection and consideration of their feelings and response to different activities and music.

The values and ethos of the school strongly promote the pupils' social and moral education. High expectations of good behaviour enable pupils to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. A high degree of trust and respect between pupils and adults enables teachers to reinforce how one should behave in society. They also develop concepts, such as fairness, through informal discussion. The personal, social and health education curriculum and the many positions of responsibility given to pupils develop a strong sense of collective and community responsibility. Pupils regularly contribute to different charities and to sponsorship of individuals in India.

Relationships between boys and girls are very good. They work and play well together and respect each other's contributions in class. They have a high degree of confidence and independence. The school's focus on the performing arts and stage productions such as Mary Poppins helps to develop the pupils' self-confidence. Pupils said that the recent educational visit to the outdoor activity centre in Devon had a particularly positive impact on developing their self-reliance and independence.

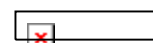
Opportunities for Year 6 to debate and participate in the recent mock elections, as well as visits from the police and fire service and visits to places of cultural and civic interest provide pupils with a good knowledge and understanding of public institutions and services in England. The student council meets regularly and provides the pupils with good opportunities to collect and represent the views of others and to influence aspects of the school's provision.

The formal curriculum, together with occasions such as International Day and the celebration of religious and cultural festivals, gives pupils a strong understanding and respect for each other's ethnic culture and language. This is reinforced positively by staff and parents through the 'Bollywood' evening and the planned African evening.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school is committed to providing a high standard of care for pupils and makes appropriate arrangements for ensuring their health, safety and welfare. The pupils are closely supervised at all times. Parents report that their children like school and that they are treated fairly and with respect.

They also consider that children are helped to settle in well when they first join the school.

Policies on anti-bullying, health and safety, behaviour and First Aid are implemented rigorously to protect pupils. The pupils are aware of school rules and the sanctions that might be used. Fire precautions and risk assessments are undertaken appropriately. Although the school has a policy for child protection, it is not up-to-date and does not comply fully with the most recent requirements. Admission and attendance registers are kept appropriately.

A disability access plan has been drafted but a time-line for implementation has yet to be defined.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

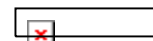
- prepare and implement policies for child protection that comply with DfES guidance: 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

- provide a clear time-line for the plans to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

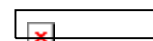


The school has appropriate and effective procedures for the appointment of staff. Prior to their appointment, checks are made to confirm their suitability to work with children, their prior experience, medical fitness and qualifications.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



Although space is at a premium, it is used well and the premises are kept clean and tidy. Emergency exits are well signed and kept free of obstructions. The accommodation is bright and well maintained and the quality of decoration is good. The classrooms, which are suitably furnished, are attractively decorated with visual aids to stimulate learning and also with examples of pupils' work that celebrate their achievements.

Washrooms are clean and appropriately maintained, with separate toilets for pupils in the Foundation Stage, for boys and girls in Key Stages 1 and 2, and for adults. However, the number of

toilets for pupils is insufficient to meet the requirements of the regulations. The school has established a curtained area, close to a washbasin and toilet, for use when pupils are ill. The student council report very positively on this development as it was in response to one of their requests.

The hard surface outside play area is well maintained with games and play courts marked out for use by pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils in the Foundation Stage have a small sectioned-off area with a safety surface and a variety of large play equipment available for use. A covered canopy area allows year-round outdoor activities for these pupils. Attractive planting further enhances the external environment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

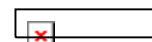
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- increase the number of washrooms for pupils, to take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school's prospectus provides a good quality of information in the clear statement of the principles upon which its curriculum and organisation are based. A website adds further details to complement and enhance those included in the prospectus. When the school accepts a pupil, the parents receive an additional information pack. This includes a good range of practical information about school hours, clothing requirements, the school's rules and regulations, disciplinary code and the arrangements made by the school for dealing with sick or injured pupils. Information for parents does not include descriptions of the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs or for those who learn English as an additional language.

Almost all parents believe the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress. Written reports on progress include helpful evaluations of the pupils' academic achievements, notably in the development of key skills in literacy and numeracy. Parents also receive end-of-term grades to show the pupils' successes in tests in English and mathematics. Newsletters are thoughtfully produced and give a brief and informative résumé of the activities and achievements of each class.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

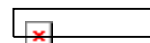
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- include in the information for parents details of its provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

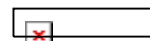


The complaints procedure provides a secure basis for ensuring that complaints are dealt with efficiently. The 'Parents Forum' which meets each half term reflects the school's willingness to hear of any general concerns and to report back to all parents on the actions taken to address them.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	St Martin's School		
DfES ref number:	302/6077		
Type of school:	Preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 71,	Girls 44,	Total 115
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 4,	Girls 3,	Total 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1,	Girls 1,	Total 2
Annual fees (day pupils):	£4,485		
Address of school:	22 Goodwyn Avenue		
	Mill Hill		
	London		
	NW7 3RG		
E-mail address:	stmartinsprep@aol.com		
Telephone number:	020 8959 1965		
Fax number:	020 8959 9065		
Headteacher:	A M Wilson		
Proprietor:	Harwil Education Limited		
Lead Inspector:	John Evans HMI		
Dates of inspection:	20 - 23 June 2005		