

# St Martin's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115349
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311920
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Abbott HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1733
6th form	349
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Geoff Morgan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Nigel Darby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Hanging Hill Lane Hutton Brentwood Essex CM13 2HG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01277 238300
<b>Fax number</b>	01277 238301

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement; leadership and management; the quality of the curriculum and other activities. They gathered evidence from school records, by observing lessons and an assembly, looking at students' work, and from interviews with senior staff, governors, and groups of teaching staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were investigated in less detail, but inspectors verified the accuracy of the school's own evaluations of teaching and learning by conducting some lesson observations jointly with senior staff. They checked safeguarding records and validated other aspects of the school's self-evaluation.

## Description of the school

St Martin's School has dual specialist status as a Technology College and as a Humanities College. It has 'Investors in People' and 'Healthy School' status. The school draws half of its students from Hutton and another third from other parts of Brentwood and nearby villages. While most of these areas are comparatively affluent, the school also serves some areas of relative deprivation. Nearly 6% of students whose ethnicity is known are of minority ethnic heritage, which is well below the national average. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is low at 5%, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs, at 1%.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Martin's School is a good school with outstanding features. It provides good value for money and makes good use of its dual specialist status to enrich the curriculum and maintain high standards. Outstanding care, guidance and support, excellent curriculum and enrichment opportunities and very strong partnerships with care agencies and other schools all contribute to students' outstanding personal development. Good teaching and the commitment to a maximum class size of 24 means that students achieve well and standards are high throughout the school. Leadership and management are good, with some excellent aspects.

The headteacher and governors have a very clear vision, which is for students to achieve high standards in their personal qualities as well as in examination results. The school has set itself a target for 90% of students to obtain five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above by 2011. This target is ambitious but the school's good record in easily exceeding national averages in recent years suggests that it is not unrealistic. As at the time of the previous report, students' progress is only a little above average when their best 8 subjects are considered, but if their achievement is considered across all subjects and in qualities valued by employers it is clearly good.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They get along with adults and other students well. They speak very highly of the way that the school promotes racial harmony. Their enjoyment of school is very high and nearly all feel safe at school: more than 95% of parents agree. Attendance and behaviour are good though some students can be a little bit boisterous in moving about the school. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. One example of this is the school's anti-bullying policy, which was devised by the school council. Their presentation to governors was so impressive, the policy was adopted without amendment.

The school's wider aims are reflected in the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support it provides and through its commitment to 'personalised active learning'. The school has a clear educational philosophy that learning should be active and relevant. The 'learning to learn' programme in Years 7 and 8 is helping students to understand how they learn most effectively. The school's successful professional development programme means that St Martin's teachers often gain promoted posts in other schools. This factor and the school's location on the London fringe, means that staff turnover is relatively high. Induction of new staff is good because there are well established systems to explain the St Martin's philosophy and its high expectations of its teachers.

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching is good overall. School monitoring records show a steady improvement and outstanding lessons are becoming quite common. One reason is that lessons increasingly engage students in independent work. One of the school's improvement strategies is to use assessment better to support learning. Senior leaders report that all teachers are following the school's assessment policy, but agree with inspectors that some are still refining their skills of using assessment to identify and react to students' different learning needs.

The curriculum has recently been revised so that students currently in Year 8 will complete Key Stage 3 in two years instead of three, bringing greater challenge and pace. This change enables greater flexibility in the curriculum pathways offered in Years 9 to 11. The new curriculum includes a much-improved vocational programme that meets the needs of a small group of

students who do not thrive on a purely academic education. The most able Key Stage 4 students can take three separate sciences and an AS level course in critical thinking. Next year, some students will begin to accumulate external qualifications from Year 9. One of the strengths of the curriculum is the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Students are supported by effective monitoring of their actual and expected progress and by a range of interventions for those who are under-performing. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and make good progress. All students receive good guidance on their plans for continuing in education. The quality of care, guidance and support is particularly strong because the main school is divided into two sections, each with its own head of school and year heads. Partnership with care agencies is building on the local authority's new approach of 'Teams Around Schools, Children and Communities'. The school also has a Parent Link Manager who is able to respond to parental contacts more quickly than teachers.

The school's strategic and '100 day' operational planning processes are exceptionally good. Ambitious medium-term targets are set and progress towards them is monitored well. Standards in the school are usually high, representing good progress, but a combination of factors led to a dip in 2007, which was reflected in the relatively disappointing GCSE results. The dip in standards was anticipated because the school has effective monitoring and evaluation procedures. Senior managers had already identified problems with science and technology provision and had recognised that the curriculum did not meet the needs of less academic students. They had identified the improvements that were needed and had begun to make the necessary long-term changes, which were implemented fully from September 2007. They also took interim measures to counter the effect on other students of poor behaviour from a small minority who had become disaffected. Exclusions increased in this period but are now much reduced. Some parents remain concerned because the attitudes and behaviour of a wider group of students were affected for a while and their progress was below expectations. This meant that students progressed less well and standards were not as high as usual.

The school presented evidence that high standards and good achievement have now returned in the main school. This evidence included the results of science GCSE modules taken in Year 10, which show a major improvement. Inspectors agreed with the school that students now achieve well and reach high standards in all year groups. They took into account the excellent preparation students receive for the world of work and their future well-being. Students develop independent learning skills and qualities like perseverance and initiative as a result of the 'personalised active learning' strategy and through the strong programmes for work related learning, enterprise and curriculum enrichment, which are made possible by the school's specialist status in humanities and technology.

The recent difficulties allowed the strong team of senior and middle managers to demonstrate their capacity for improving the school. The governing body showed its effectiveness by asking tough questions during this period. In judging leadership and management to be good with outstanding features the inspection team took into account the dip that preceded the improvements.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

St Martin's has a good sixth form with outstanding features, in which students reach high standards in their academic work and their personal development. The sixth form is well led and managed. Students have above average standards on entry to the sixth form because there is a minimum entry requirement. As in Key Stage 4, students' progress in many subjects is only

a little above average but achievement is good across a broad and enriched curriculum in which most students take four or five subjects, including General Studies. The proportion of A and B grades is increasing and now exceeds the average for the maintained sector. The wide-ranging enrichment programme gives many students the edge they need to win places at the most competitive universities. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. The sixth form curriculum is good overall. Inspectors agreed with the school that the sixth form curriculum provides outstandingly well for the students who gain a place. However, the sixth form does not cater for all students from the main school who might want to continue their study. School leaders judge that the sixth form would not be able to sustain a programme of vocational courses at level two or three that matched the programmes on offer in the further education (FE) sector, which has the appropriate resources and offers a wide range of provision. They recognise the lack of such provision in Brentwood and are working with the local 14-19 partnership to address this issue. They presented figures to show that many students who leave St Martin's at sixteen enrol on FE courses in nearby towns. However, they could not say how many completed their courses successfully.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Further improve achievement and progress so that they compare as favourably on a 'per subject' basis as they do when considered as a whole.
- Further improve teachers' use of assessment: (i) to improve their responsiveness to students' needs that emerge in the lesson; (ii) to provide subject-specific guidance for students on how to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Martin's School, Hutton, Brentwood CM13 2HG

I recently inspected your school with my colleague Graham Preston. We would both like to thank you for your co-operation and helpfulness during our visit. This was a short inspection where we concentrated on three main areas: achievement and standards; curriculum and enrichment activities; leadership and management. We also observed lessons and checked out some of the good things we were told about your personal development and the care, guidance and support that you receive.

We agreed that St Martin's provides outstanding care, support and guidance and we were impressed by the way you were developing important personal qualities that will help you in the future, like independence of mind, perseverance and the ability to work in teams. You told us that the school promotes racial harmony well. We felt that recent changes, such as the two-year Key Stage 3 and the more flexible Key Stage 4, mean that there is something for everyone in the school. Extras such as field-trips, visiting speakers, enterprise days, conferences, sports, music and drama activities enable the curriculum to meet your needs exceptionally well. Sixth form provision is also good. Students who get a place have their needs met well, but it does not meet the needs of all Year 11 students who might want to attend, meaning that some have to travel quite long distances to go to colleges.

Dr Darby and the senior teachers told us how the school had improved this term following some problems last year. You agreed that behaviour had improved and that teaching was also better in many classes. We therefore judged leadership to be good in putting the school back on its usual successful track. You are now making good progress overall and the standard of your work is very high. We compared the results of St Martin's students with those of similar students in other schools. Overall achievement at St Martin's compares well with other schools, because you study more subjects and you develop personal qualities that will help you in later life. However, in many cases, progress is only just above average when compared subject by subject. We have recommended that the school should improve this aspect of your progress. We agreed with senior staff that the other area for improvement should be the quality of assessment during lessons and in marking. Your best teachers can tell if you are finding a lesson too easy or too hard and make changes straight away. If all teachers can develop this high-level skill they will be able to give you even better guidance about how to improve your work.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott HMI