

# St Martin's School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	837/6003
Unique Reference Number	113940
Inspection number	322009
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

St Martin's is a co-educational independent day school in Bournemouth. There are 93 pupils on roll between the ages of 4 and 11 years. The school was founded in 1914 as a Church of England primary school although pupils from all denominations are admitted. The school aims to ensure that pupils grow up in a friendly supportive environment. It has a good record of its pupils passing selection tests to local grammar schools and gaining entry or scholarships to independent secondary schools. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurately identifies its own strengths. The school was last inspected in November 2003.

## Evaluation of the school

St Martin's School is a friendly, welcoming school where pupils develop their skills and knowledge at a good rate. The overall quality of education is good. Pupils achieve well in science, English and mathematics and the vast majority gain places in the secondary school of their choice. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. The school places a high premium on the development of pupils' confidence and self esteem and as a result pupils develop mature attitudes and work hard. Teaching is good overall and the small class sizes contribute to the family atmosphere that is prevalent across the school. Improvement since the last inspection is significant and the school meets most regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school provides a broad curriculum which includes all subjects of the National Curriculum. There is good provision for basic skills. The school focuses on reading, writing and mathematics with a greater proportion of the timetable devoted to these subjects and as a result progress is good in these areas. The school has implemented a more structured approach to personal, social and health education (PSHE) across the age range since the last inspection. Regular games and swimming lessons allow pupils to develop their physical control and coordination as well as their tactical skills. French is taught to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 and they enjoy writing to pen-friends, which helps to improve their written French. The school has arranged international exchanges and some pupils visited France last year. They are due to act as host to French students

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in 2009. The school organises trips and visits during the year but several parents would like these to occur more frequently. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and take on responsibilities. Each class assigns pupils certain tasks which they carry out enthusiastically and responsibly. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is restricted by the small numbers of computers available. The school managers are aware of this and have arranged to purchase laptops which will allow wider access to the younger pupils. Music is well developed, with pupils learning an instrument and taking part in regular music appreciation sessions. Pupils perform complex pieces of music on the recorder and are looking forward to a school performance of 'Joseph' at the end of term.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. Pupils respond well to the support and encouragement that is provided within the small class sizes. Teachers get to know their individual pupils well. Relationships are good, with older pupils responding well to gentle humour and younger ones from the personal encouragement they receive. Staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best and this matches the school's motto, to be 'thorough'. Teachers form a strong team and they share information which helps pupils in their transition to other classes in the school. The whole school systems for rewarding good behaviour are effectively managed and celebrated in assemblies, helping to create in pupils a positive attitude to their work. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support learning in the two youngest classes. Specialist subject teachers have good subject knowledge which lends confidence to their teaching.

There is some inconsistency between classes in the use of assessment information to plan lessons and as a result the needs of higher ability pupils are not met consistently. In good lessons, teachers use assessments to set suitable work that matches the different abilities of pupils closely. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were grouped to provide them with extra attention and to reinforce a teaching point. In an English lesson the main learning points stemmed from careful and thorough assessment of pupils' homework and this helped them to understand how to improve their work and enabled them to make good progress in the lesson.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' personal development is good. The school is committed to developing each pupil as a valued individual. The school celebrates achievement and pupils appreciate the recognition of their efforts through the awarding of team points, pasta points and pupil-of-the-week certificates. Spiritual development is a strength of the school and assemblies embody the 'family' atmosphere. They convey a real sense of warmth with enthusiastic singing, confident Bible readings and heartfelt prayers accompanied by genuine applause from all participants.

The school's positive ethos underpins pupils' good behaviour around the school and in lessons. Pupils are polite confident, friendly, very courteous and articulate. They

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made it clear to the inspectors that they enjoy being at this school and the good levels of attendance reflect this. From the earliest age, pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the very rare disagreements are resolved with an apology or a handshake. Pupils in all classes are given suitable tasks and responsibilities which they carry out sensibly and with evident pride. Pupils have a good knowledge of public institutions and are visited by representatives from the police to talk about personal safety.

There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture and faith. Through revisions to the curriculum the school are providing increased opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and religions and there is a high degree of racial harmony within the school. Pupils are prepared well for their future life.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare health and safety is good. The staff have good relationships with pupils. The pupils describe school as, 'like a little family.' Child protection and other policies required to support pupils' welfare and well-being are in place. General risk assessments are completed for off-site trips and visits including the weekly swimming sessions. Fire-fighting equipment is tested annually, regular fire drills are completed and pupils are clear about procedures.

Safety aspects are emphasised in PSHE and pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss issues which include staying safe. In a science lesson on tasting foods, Year 1 pupils spoke sensibly about the dangers of tasting berries and toadstools. Incidents of bullying are very rare and pupils are confident that in this small school there is always someone to talk to and resolve any issues. Pupils showed good awareness of staying healthy; fruit and healthy snacks were a common sight .

Accident records include the circumstances and the treatment given. Seven members of staff are qualified in First Aid and appropriate equipment is stored conveniently close to playgrounds. The admission and attendance registers meet regulatory requirements.

The school has drafted a policy and plans for improving access for disabled users, and meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are suitable recruitment procedures in place. The school meets all the regulations and has followed up the recommendations from the last inspection. The school follows up references for new staff and checks carefully their medical fitness. All staff have been subject to clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure they are suitable to work with children. The single central record of staff information meets requirements.

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## School's premises and accommodation

The premises provide suitable and safe teaching accommodation and meet almost all of the regulations. There is a small hard surface area to play on and a larger grass area which is used when the weather permits. In this small school building there are no separate facilities containing a washbasin for pupils who are ill other than the school staff room and, as a result, the current arrangements do not meet this particular regulation. However, the school does take care to contact parents as soon as a child is ill. Pupils are well supervised and allowed to rest on chairs in the staff room and staff are at pains to ensure that the welfare of pupils is not compromised as a result.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

All the regulations are met. However a significant number of parents are unsure about the complaints process and do not feel confident about approaching the school with a complaint. The school is aware of this issue and is intent on working with parents to improve communication.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedure is thorough and complies with all the requirements of the regulations in all respects.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School premises) regulations 1999 (paragraph 5 (I)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- increase the use of assessments to inform the planning of specific learning objectives for learners of all abilities.

- improve curriculum provision for ICT by increasing the numbers of computers available to pupils.

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## School details

Name of school	St Martin's School
DCSF number	837/6003
Unique reference number	113940
Type of school	Day primary school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1914
Age range of pupils	4–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 59      Girls: 32      Total: 91
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0      Girls: 2      Total: 2
Annual fees	£ 3,150 - £5,250
Address of school	15 Stokewood Road Bournemouth Dorset BH3 7NA
Telephone number	01202 760744
Headteacher	Mr Tim Shenton
Proprietor	Mrs M Shenton, Miss J Shenton, Mrs N Tinacci, Mr T Shenton
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI
Dates of inspection	11–12 June 2008