

St Martin's School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	302/6077
Unique Reference Number	101383
Inspection number	329697
Inspection dates	12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

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 northwest 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 101 pupils on roll, including seven who attend part time. The school supports pupils with a statement of special educational need. The last inspection took place in 2005.

St Martin's aims to cultivate independent, confident and articulate young people so that they are able to transfer to their secondary schools with ease.

Evaluation of the school

St Martin's School provides a good quality of education and successfully meets its aims, as does its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The commitment of staff to the needs of all the pupils underpins the good quality of care which, together with the good curriculum and teaching, ensure that children and pupils make good progress. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has made satisfactory progress in meeting the regulations highlighted by the last inspection report and now meets nearly all the regulations.

Quality of education

The good quality curriculum, which has some outstanding features, provides interesting learning experiences in the academic, aesthetic and practical areas of learning for children in the EYFS and in Years 1 to 6. It encourages excellent personal development, ensuring that children and pupils are confident when facing new challenges. The curriculum includes additional subjects to meet the demands of the entrance examinations, which the majority of the older pupils take for their next school. Specialist staff teach information and communication technology (ICT),

physical education (PE), music, French, Spanish and Latin. The curriculum is very well planned and links between different subjects help the pupils to understand the value and significance of their work. The school's ethos successfully promotes the pupils' personal and social development, particularly through the performing arts. All pupils learn to play the recorder and many go on to learn other instruments. Each year pupils take part in three concerts where they sing, dance and play instruments. There is good provision for those with learning difficulties. The individual education plans for these pupils set realistic and achievable targets that are discussed regularly with parents and teachers.

A wide range of visits outside school further enhances the curriculum; for example, pupils recently visited Buckingham Palace, the Junior Proms at the Albert Hall and the Science Museum. Year 6 pupils take part in an annual residential activity week and report that they enjoy the challenge of the physical activities.

Teaching and assessment are good. The teachers are confident, knowledgeable, thoroughly prepared and adapt well to the limited space available for teaching and learning. Most plan their lessons carefully for the whole class activity but do not consistently plan for each ability group. They teach in a purposeful, interesting and occasionally exciting way. For example, during a Year 4 lesson pupils worked on a playscript and then in small ability groups presented their playlets confidently. Pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning. The emphasis given to reading and writing for a purpose and on speaking and listening skills, ensures that they have a secure grounding in literacy skills. Pupils respond well to good teaching, listen attentively and give of their best. The pupils' work is marked but most staff do not give guidance on how pupils could improve their work. The pupils' behaviour is outstanding, relationships are excellent in the classrooms and the pupils have a committed attitude to learning and enjoy most of their lessons. By Year 6 pupils have a very positive sense of their learning achievements and commented that they enjoyed all their lessons. Children in the EYFS enjoy their activities, which have a good balance of those led by teachers and those initiated by children themselves. They are organised and supervised effectively despite the limited space.

The classroom space is limited and this has an impact upon the range of activities, which can take place, although staff are very good at adapting their lessons to overcome this. The pupils recognise that shortage of space restricts the range of their work; learning activities in most cases are restricted to the use of the desktops and activities such as investigative and practical work cannot take place successfully on the floor. The school is aware that it now needs to consider ways of making more effective use of the available space in the small classrooms.

The assessment of pupils' learning is based on consistent testing of the current topics. Although this gives an overall picture of the progress each pupil makes each term, the use of standardised tests, for example, does not yet give the school a clear picture of pupils' achievements in order to plan lessons which meet consistently the needs of all pupils. The older pupils are successful in gaining places at schools of

their choice. Parents receive a detailed written report and have an opportunity to attend consultation evenings. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were mostly very positive about the school, making comments such as *'a wonderful school with a warm family feel'*.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as it was during the last inspection. Assemblies contribute well in this respect because there is a strong family feel to this school and through this daily act they are able to join in shared spiritual values. By the time pupils leave, they are confident, self-assured and articulate young people. The broad cultural diversity of pupils in the school provides a rich learning resource of which teachers make effective use. Behaviour is outstanding, both in class and moving around the building. The headteacher and staff set high standards of care and as a result pupils feel secure, enjoy learning and develop a strong self-confidence. Pupils have a positive view of their abilities in basic skills, especially ICT, because their teachers tell them how well they are doing. They confirm that they are happy at school with comments such as *'I love my school...its good fun here'*. There are many opportunities for pupils to raise money for charity through enterprising activities such as baking cakes. Older pupils have a well-developed understanding of democracy, in part due to their experience of the active school council, members of which are invited to staff meetings to make their case for change. Such experiences assist their future economic well-being. There is a complete absence of bullying and racism. Older pupils acknowledge that they are required to modify their breaktime play due to the restricted available space outdoors. Pupils enjoy participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the shows which are put on for parents. Their attendance is good. They have an understanding of how public services work, assisted by the extensive visits.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school provides a good level of welfare, health and safety for its pupils. In particular the attention given to the pastoral needs of the children and pupils demonstrates the commitment that places the child at the heart of the school, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. The pupils enjoy the healthy school lunch and are encouraged to take regular exercise including the frequent, well-planned PE lessons. The child protection officer has received fairly recent training, but this has not been updated to meet the latest Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance, and the school has reacted very promptly to book a place on the next available course. All staff have the necessary enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. There are good systems to ensure that pupils feel safe and pupils confirm this. They do, however, feel that the large number of pupils and children out in the playground at the same time can lead to accidents and a restriction on more active games. The first aiders at the school have recently been trained in paediatric first aid and accidents are carefully recorded. The school is

vigilant about fire safety. It now fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has implemented its three-year accessibility plan since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The school is effective in meeting the needs of the children. The staff plan an appropriate range of both teacher-led and child-initiated activities using the EYFS guidance. The staff support each child well as an individual. Children enjoy school and make good progress in their learning and development in relation to their starting points. Their progress is monitored carefully and recorded, although not all records are dated accurately. Children are active learners and are encouraged to explore through play. They play happily together or on their own and communicate well. Relationships are very good, children feel safe and a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Children from different backgrounds and cultures play in harmony. The attractive classroom environment provides a very good range of resources. Children's welfare is promoted effectively but staff ratios in the Nursery class are currently insufficient. The EYFS is led and managed efficiently. The school has built up positive links with parents and carers who confirmed through the questionnaires that they are well informed about their children's progress.

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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that staff receive safeguarding training to meet the latest DCSF guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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

- make better use of the available playground space at breaktimes (paragraph 5 (t)).

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the school must:

- improve staff ratios in the Nursery class.

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:

- make more effective use of standardised tests to assess pupils' progress and to help staff plan lessons which meet the needs of all pupils
- make more effective use of the available classroom space including the EYFS.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	St Martin's School		
DCSF number	302/6077		
Unique reference number	101383		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	Pre-1940		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 57	Girls: 37	Total: 94
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 4	Total: 7
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees	£5,885		
Address of school	22 Goodwyn Avenue		
	Mill Hill		
	London		
	NW7 3RG		
Telephone number	020 8959 1965		
Fax number	020 8959 9065		
Email address	Info@stmartinsmillhill.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Wilson		
Proprietor	Mrs Angela Wilson		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI		
Dates of inspection	12 November 2008		