

St Martin's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113042
Local Authority	City of Derby
Inspection number	338076
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Heal
Headteacher	Mrs Melsa Buxton
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and met with governors, staff, parents and groups of students. They also scrutinised a wide range of documentation and examined 6 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Can the school provide evidence to affirm that students are making good progress?
- How successful are the school's strategies for developing students' basic literacy skills?
- Are students provided with sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning?
- How well does the school's curriculum meet the needs of all students?

Information about the school

St Martin's School educates students with a wide range of complex needs. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. All students have a statement to address their special educational needs. Many students have previously attended mainstream schools and some have attended pupil referral units. A significant number of students join or leave the school at other than the usual times. Around a third joins the school after the date of normal secondary transfer, some as late as Year 10. An unusually large number are entitled to free school meals. Students are predominantly from White British backgrounds, although an increasing number come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Because of their circumstances a significant number are considered to be vulnerable. Boys outnumber girls by four to one.

The school has the International Schools Award and Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Martin's provides its students with an outstanding quality of education. The well-being and progress of every student is at the heart of everything it does. The staff are dedicated and passionate about doing their best for the students. Relationships between students and adults are incredibly positive, resulting in students striving to succeed to the best of their abilities. Students behave exceptionally well. They are full of praise for the care, guidance and support they receive and these views are supported by their parents and carers. Students whose difficulties form part of the autistic spectrum receive superb support and make excellent progress. All students benefit from carefully tailored individual provision. Those who face the most significant emotional and social difficulties receive specific 'personalised learning' packages. This provision meets their needs superbly and they also make excellent progress. A measure of the school's success is that by the time students leave at the end of Year 11 the vast majority either continue their education or enter the world of work.

When compared with national averages and age related expectations standards are often low. However, from very low starting points and in the face of considerable personal challenges, students of all abilities make excellent progress. Prior to joining the school many students, for a variety of reasons, have missed significant periods of their education. The school's watchword is 'Caring to Learn' and it rightly places major emphasis on improving students' behaviour and promoting their personal and social skills. It does this very successfully, laying the foundation for many students to make outstanding strides in a range of subjects and vocational courses. This success is underpinned by an excellent quality of teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants give students the confidence to express their views and respond thoughtfully to questions. The school's strategies for improving basic literacy skills are proving to be successful, especially with younger students, but have not been in place long enough to have a full impact on the standards attained by older students. The curriculum is matched precisely and very effectively to the needs of every student. Students also benefit from an excellent range of additional activities and educational visits that extend their understanding of the community and of the wider world.

The organisational skills of the senior management team are such that every member of staff has the confidence to give their all to supporting the students. Overseeing the whole process is a headteacher who is passionate that nothing but the best is good enough for her students and staff. Governors fulfil their roles satisfactorily. They are great advocates for the school's work and the chair and vice-chair provide support that is much appreciated by the headteacher and staff. However, several governors are not involved sufficiently in evaluating the quality of provision; consequently they do not

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have a clear vision of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to maintain the present high quality of provision.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement in the future is outstanding and is underpinned by very thorough procedures for self-evaluation, in which senior managers and other staff are fully involved. This is supported by the exceptional progress that students make in all aspects of their education and the impact of significant developments since the time of the last inspection. For example, the last inspection challenged the school to increase students' independence as learners and improve their capacity to take responsibility. It has done this extremely well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully embed the strategies to improve students' basic literacy skills so that they have a full impact on standards in all year groups.
 - Establish structured and manageable arrangements to enable the governing body to evaluate the quality of provision and provide full support and challenge for the headteacher and senior managers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students' behaviour is excellent and they clearly enjoy their learning. This exemplified by attendance that is well above average. Students play a full and active part in lessons, are eager to answer questions, willing to volunteer for tasks, and are keen to share their knowledge. Whilst standards remain well-below age related expectations, students make excellent progress in many areas of their learning. There is clear evidence in national test results, the school's tracking of students' progress and in the work seen during lessons to show that standards are improving year on year. Data which compares students' progress with that of similar schools affirms that they do exceptionally well. Improving levels of success are evident in the National Curriculum levels that younger students attain, especially in subjects such as information and communication technology, geography, music and physical education. Similarly improvements are evident in GCSEs, Entry level courses and in a range of vocational courses, such as car mechanics, horticulture and food technology.

Students say they feel safe at school. Instances of bullying are almost non-existent. School records show that significant incidents of unacceptable behaviour and exclusions have reduced dramatically in recent years, to the point where they have almost been eliminated. Students are well informed about the importance of eating healthily. They are supported in this by the high quality of food provided at school. They are also eager to participate in the excellent range of opportunities for physical activity and exercise. Students are courteous and helpful towards adults and each other. Because of the school's clear focus on personal development they are becoming increasingly independent and willing to take responsibility. They acquire skills that will serve them well in future employment. The school does all it can to prepare students for this time by focussing on their social skills alongside their academic development. Increases in

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students' self-confidence and an excellent range of opportunities means they make an exceptional contribution to the school, local and wider community. Students respond superbly to opportunities to be peer mentors, providing support for younger students and take duties, such as being school councillors very seriously. The schools holds the International Schools Award and visits to such places as Tanzania, South Africa and the Sierra Nevada in Spain provide students with lasting insights into the wider world. Visits such as these, coupled with opportunities to sing, make music and participate in sport make a very effective contribution to students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The content of lessons and the curriculum are carefully tailored to meet students' individual learning needs. All staff are fully committed to enhancing students' personal

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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and social skills and their self-esteem, without ever losing site of their academic development. At Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4 the full range of expected subjects is covered. In addition an impressive range of vocational courses is available, often provided in partnership with other schools and colleges. These courses enable every student to deploy their talents and to do something which captures their interest. Promoting the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology play a central part in all lessons. There is firm belief that every student has something at which they can shine and the school is determined to find it. With this in mind the school has identified those who have special talents across a wide range of areas and does all it can to ensure these talents can blossom. All lessons have objectives that relate to personal development, such as working well together in groups and sustaining effort. Expectations of students' capabilities are high and constant reminders highlight lesson objectives. This enables students to be increasingly aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Every lesson provides students with personal development and academic targets. Teachers are expert in ensuring that students are involved in the evaluation of exactly how they are progressing towards these targets. The match of activities to students' learning needs is very impressive. This is because teachers and teaching assistants track students' progress meticulously. This results in prompt action if any student shows the slightest sign of falling behind.

The school has many students who, because of their challenging circumstances, are potentially vulnerable. However, everything is in place and nothing is too much trouble to ensure they are safe and able to thrive. Liaison with parents and carers and support agencies is of the highest quality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior management team leave no stone unturned in their efforts to move the school forward and improve the provision for students. Their passion, to ensure that everything for the students as good as it can be, carries everyone forward on a tide of enthusiasm. The vision for the future includes moving into new buildings in about three years time. However, this prospect is not distracting staff from maintaining the high quality of provision on the present site. Arrangements for managers at all levels to evaluate the quality of provision are robust and very effective in pointing the direction

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for improvements. This is a school at which there is no sense of complacency as it seeks to become even better. Arrangements for the continued development of staff at all levels are outstanding. In this respect the school has an enviable reputation for nurturing its own staff by identifying and developing their expertise. The focus for these developments is consistently targeted at what is best for the students.

Governors fulfil their important statutory duties, including the need to ensure that safeguarding measures meet requirements. Some, particularly the chair, vice-chair and parent governors are great advocates for the work of the school and are very supportive. However, others are not involved sufficiently in evaluating or holding the school to account for the quality of provision. Community cohesion is promoted very effectively at all levels. The school reaches out to its community at all levels by involving students in community events and welcoming representatives and community groups into the school. Parents, carers and members of the community particularly appreciate the popular social events arranged by the school and the opportunities provided to guide them in supporting students' learning. Students' understanding of the wider community is enhanced superbly by frequent opportunities to visit contrasting communities, both in this country and abroad.

Students' excellent progress and the wise use of resources provide a clear indication that the school gives outstanding value for money. Resources are frequently supplemented by the foresight and energy of the headteacher and senior leaders for tapping in to available funding from local and national sources.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have very positive views of the school and are pleased with the quality of education it provides. This view is strongly affirmed by discussions that inspectors held with parents and carers. However only six parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. This is mainly because the school had conducted its own survey of parents and carers' views only two weeks earlier. The views of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire correlate closely with those of the school's own questionnaire. This latter survey generated 35 responses, which is close to half of those entitled to make a response. This survey showed parents and carers to be very pleased with the quality of education provided.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Martin's School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 6 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	50	2	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	50	2	33	1	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	33	4	67	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	33	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	67	1	17	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	50	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



01 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Martin's School, Derby DE24 8RQ

You may remember I visited your school recently with two of my colleagues to undertake its inspection. Firstly I must thank you for the kindness of your welcome and for being so helpful. We were delighted to learn how much you enjoy school and appreciate the help you receive. We learned that you and many of your parents think you attend an excellent school. We agree; we think your school provides you with an outstanding education.

Yours is a school that enables you to do your best. You receive excellent teaching. They plan lessons that contain activities that are just right for you. Not too easy, not too hard; but just right. If you have the ability to be good at something, they will find it and help you to succeed. All the adults play their part in taking exceptional care of you and this helps to give you the confidence to try hard and do your very best. I know that sometimes, for many of you, things are not easy and you face many challenges. It is because of this that I am immensely impressed by your excellent behaviour and by how hard you work during lessons, well done.

Mrs Buxton and her team do all they can to make the school as good as it can be. They are always looking for ways to make it even better. With this in mind I have asked for two things to happen -

To keep giving you the help you need to improve your speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. This will help you greatly in the future.

To make sure the governors give the school all the support it needs and look closely at how well it is working.

Keep up the good work. Finally, I must wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead Inspector

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