

St Mary's College

Independent school inspection report

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Unique reference number	116567
Inspection number	341955
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Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett 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.

Age group: 3–16

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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 the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.¹

This was a light touch inspection 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 Mary's College is a co-educational Roman Catholic independent school for pupils aged three to 16 years, with pupils in the nursery, preparatory or senior parts of the school. It was founded in 1922 as a boys' school. In 1992 the school started admitting girls who now form about a quarter of the school population. There are 296 pupils on roll, of these 41 children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage with 25 children in the nursery and 16 in reception. The school provides after-school child care for pupils until 5.20pm each day. This is registered with the school and forms part of the whole-school inspection. St Mary's is a Christian school whose mission statement is embodied in the lives and works of the De la Mennais Brothers whose aim is to make Jesus better known and loved. The school welcomes pupils from other faiths and over half the pupils are non Catholic. The school was last inspected in February 2007.

Evaluation of the school

St Mary's College provides a satisfactory quality of education for all its pupils. Results in GCSE examinations show that most pupils make good, and for some outstanding, progress as they move through the school. Pupils enjoy school, feel well cared for, and their behaviour is outstanding. Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were supportive of the school. The school successfully meets its core aim for promoting Christian values and respect for each other and provides outstanding opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Since the last inspection high standards have been maintained and some improvements in relation to the curriculum, pupil progress tracking and disability access have been made. The school meets most regulations. However, a number of important ones relating to health and safety, and the safeguarding of pupils are not. Accordingly, although appropriate attention is given to most aspects of their care, overall the welfare, health and safety for the pupils is inadequate.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. In Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 pupils follow all subjects from the National Curriculum. However, there is a high focus on developing pupils' basic skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, but also information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils learn French from the nursery onwards and German from Year 8. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum, which is reasonably broad, is based on 12 academic GCSE courses. In addition, pupils may choose one additional GCSE subject to study, for example physical education, art or music. The curriculum is adapted on an individual basis to match more closely the needs of some Key Stage 4 students, for example alternative courses or college placement. Information and communication technology is now taught as a full GCSE course from Year 9. However, there is no provision for design and technology beyond Key Stage 3. All pupils study religious education and the various aspects of pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) are covered across a range of subjects such as history and religious education as well through the tutorial and assembly programmes, although the provision is not clearly mapped. Pupils receive effective careers advice, particularly in relation to help with their choice of post-16 courses at other schools or colleges, but there are no opportunities for work experience. Schemes of work that support and underpin teaching and learning across the school are in place. However, they are not well structured and do not take a cohesive approach to developing pupils' basic and independent learning skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those falling behind receive good additional support.

The curriculum is enriched with a good range of clubs, events and visits. The majority of after-school activities are sports based, although there are homework clubs in both the junior and senior parts of the school. Pupils engage enthusiastically in such activities, including the annual Year 6 residential trip in Wales. Good systems are in place to support pupils who are new to the school and in the transition into each new key stage as they move through the school. Provision for pupils in the after-school registered provision is effective and based on an independent choice of activities.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall but there is inconsistency across the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous to lead to improvements in its quality. Lessons are often, but not always, planned so that pupils of differing abilities do the same task. The more able do extension tasks if they finish early, whilst pupils who have particular learning needs are helped to complete the task. This practice, whilst highly supportive for most pupils, can slow the pace of a lesson, particularly for the more able, and does not sufficiently provide them different and challenging approaches to learning. Good questioning and smooth transitions between activities promote good learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and teachers are able to respond confidently to questions from pupils and use this to extend both individual and whole-class learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly using the school's agreed assessment criteria which pupils clearly understand. In Key Stages 3 and 4, assessments are also carried out through

internal tests, external examinations and coursework assessments against GCSE requirements. New and improved systems are in place to test pupils' attainment on entry to the school and to track their progress against carefully set achievement targets.

At all stages, pupils enjoy their learning so that their progress and achievement are good and for some it is outstanding. A significant proportion of pupils join at times other than the start of a key stage and the majority of them make outstanding progress. In the junior school, pupils achieve at National Curriculum levels that are well above those expected nationally for their age at both Key Stages 1 and 2. In the senior school, pupils' performance at GCSE has been consistently high for several years with an average of 95% of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics over the last five years. There has been some lower performance in a very few subjects but the school has taken action to remedy this. In 2009, around a third of these grades were at A or A* level, showing an improvement in attainment from previous years.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The personal development of all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding. This reflects the emphasis placed by the school on guiding the development of the whole person based on Christian values. Pupils recognise and appreciate this feature and speak openly of how much they enjoy being at the school and on the strong friendships they make. The positive relationships and well-supported learning experiences enable them to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence very well. As a result, their attitudes to learning are excellent and their attendance is good. The high focus on acting responsibly and with respect helps pupils to develop an understanding of tolerance for each other. Consequently, behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are keen to contribute to the community life of the school and take on numerous posts of responsibility including being prefects both in the junior and senior parts of the school, and school councillors or buddies. This, together with the high focus on basic skills and good advice on careers and post-16 courses prepare pupils well for the next steps in their education. Pupils organise and raise considerable sums for charities and this enables them to develop excellent understanding of those much less fortunate than themselves. Through lessons, assemblies, tutorial sessions and school visits they learn about citizenship, British institutions, and other faiths and cultures, which develops their excellent understanding of their own, the national and international communities. Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding and pupils particularly value the quiet rooms and the reflection day each class spends at a local pastoral centre.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This aspect of the school's work is inadequate overall because the child protection, anti-bullying, fire and school visits policies and procedures are not sufficiently rigorous and do not fully meet current guidelines and requirements. In particular, there are significant weaknesses in the procedures to appoint staff. For other aspects

of welfare, health and safety, there are an appropriate range of policies and procedures in place covering all age groups in the school. Almost all policies and procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage meet current requirements and guidance. However, in the senior and junior parts of the school, they lack sufficient detail, do not always reflect current practices, and differ in their content. All staff have been provided with child protection awareness training but the training for designated senior and junior school child protection officer is out of date. Nevertheless, the day-to-day running of the school ensures all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are well supported pastorally and good attention is given to health and safety around the school. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. Appropriate systems for behaviour management are in place to ensure that the pupils feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare and the pupils know who to go to if they have a problem. Both the curriculum and tutorial programme help to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Menu choices in the dining room for healthy eating have improved since the last inspection. However, pupils say they would welcome a wider choice as well as for fruit and salads to be more readily available. A few parents also supported this view. All pupils have good opportunities for regular physical exercise, although pupils in the senior school would welcome more choice of sports. Since the last inspection, mobility access and facilities for the disabled have been improved in the senior part of the school and a three-year accessibility plan is now in place. However, this focuses mostly on mobility access rather than on a provision for a wider range of disabilities and timelines are not clearly shown.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. The curriculum provides a wide range of imaginative activities and experiences which successfully promote the six areas of learning, so that children enjoy and achieve well and attain standards that are above average by the end of Reception. The warm and welcoming, well-resourced and attractive environment helps children to develop confidence rapidly and to feel safe and secure. There is a suitable balance between teacher-led and child-initiated learning. The children settle promptly into school life because the sharing of information about the children between the staff and parents is consistently promoted. Teaching is good overall. Planning on a weekly basis is thorough and reflects children's progress in learning, although longer-term planning is not as detailed and does not sufficiently support progression into Key Stage 1. Children's speaking, listening and reasoning skills are well developed because staff extend their learning with the use of good questioning skills. The outdoor environment is well planned, easily accessible and used effectively.

The children's personal development is excellent. Children are caring of each other, show high levels of mutual respect and play harmoniously together. As their achievements are regularly praised, they are keen to work independently as well as with others. Children's welfare is promoted effectively and staff provide excellent day-to-day care. However, recruitment procedures which are managed by the main

school do not fully meet requirements. Children learn to adopt healthy lifestyles and they are encouraged to eat healthily and have plenty of exercise. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. The coordinator has a clear understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and is keen to drive on-going improvement in the setting.

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:

- prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying that has regard to the DCSF guidance *Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools* (paragraph 3(2)(a))
- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has closer regard to DCSF guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- ensure it complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff that all the required checks have been carried out (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- establish prior to the confirmation of appointment that in the case of any person for whom, by reason of living or having lived outside the UK, that further checks have been made to establish his or her suitability to work in a school as the proprietor considers appropriate having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 4(2)(c))
- ensure that the required checks have been carried out on any person supplied to the school by an employment business (including an agency) before they commence work (paragraphs 4A(2-7))
- ensure that the required checks have been carried out on all members of the proprietorial body (paragraph 4B(4) and 4B(5))

- ensure that the single central register provides evidence that all checks made on the suitability of staff, including their right to work, have been made (paragraph 4C(2) and 4C(3))
- ensure that the single central register provides evidence that all checks made on persons supplied to the school by an employment business (including an agency) have been made (paragraph 4C(4) and 4C(5))
- ensure that the single central register provides evidence that all checks made on all members of the proprietorial body, including their right to work, have been made (paragraph 4C(6) and 4C(7)).

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

- ensure that the qualifications of staff are accurately recorded

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 good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		✓		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?			✓	
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?			✓	
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?			✓	

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	St Mary's College		
DCSF number	852/6003		
Unique reference number	116567		
Type of school	Roman Catholic co-educational		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1922		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 208	Girls: 88	Total: 296
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 5	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7,365 (secondary) £ 5,985 (primary)		
Address of school	57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire, SO18 4DJ		
Telephone number	02380 671267		
Fax number	02380 971268		
Email address	stmarysoffice@aol.com		
Headteacher	Brother Reverend Francis		
Proprietor	Brothers of Christian Instruction		
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI		
Dates of inspection	22 September 2009		