

School inspection report

21 to 23 May 2024

St Martin's School

22 Goodwyn Avenue

Mill Hill

London

NW7 3RG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and governors work together to successfully promote the wellbeing of pupils. Robust safeguarding arrangements and effective health and safety procedures ensure that pupils are kept safe. The school provides a nurturing environment in which pupils feel safe and happy, and are encouraged to be the best they can be in all areas of learning. Leaders and governors ensure that the school consistently meets the Standards.
2. Lessons are carefully planned, resources are used well and effective teaching methods are employed. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress. Pupils are successful in gaining places at local senior schools, many of which are academically selective.
3. Children in the early years make good progress across all seven areas of learning. Staff enrich children's communication skills and encourage them to use interesting language to recall their experiences and express their opinions. Staff provide a rich range of activities and play opportunities that support children's learning in key areas of development.
4. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive additional support for the development of their spoken and written English so that they also make good progress.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified promptly. Their needs are assessed fully and addressed appropriately. Pupils who have SEND are suitably supported so that they too make good progress from their starting points.
6. Staff usually provide pupils with regular and informative feedback that helps them understand how they can improve their work. Pupils value the feedback they are given, and it helps them to make better progress. However, occasionally, feedback does not adhere to the school's policy and provides less effective support to pupils.
7. Pupils are well behaved and show respect to all. They are polite and kind. There is virtually no bullying, and any such instances are dealt with swiftly and appropriately.
8. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the life of the school through roles such as being on the school council or eco council. Pupils support the local community in a number of ways including picking up litter from the neighbouring streets.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the school's marking and feedback policy is followed consistently across all subjects so that pupils always receive high-quality feedback that helps them to make good progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The school's aims, articulated in the prominently displayed 'values tree', are central to their decision making and permeate school life. They have a strong positive impact on how well pupils behave and how hard they work.
10. Governors conduct a comprehensive annual review of the school and identify any areas in which it can improve. Leaders produce and implement a thorough school improvement plan which targets the most important areas for development. The effective quality assurance procedures, overseen by governors, help leaders to continually monitor the quality of provision and to develop all aspects of the school.
11. Governors know the school well. They are kept well informed by, for example, the regular written reports they receive from leaders on all aspects of the school. They ensure that leaders have appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively, and that the Standards are consistently met.
12. Leaders oversee the effective implementation of policies and procedures. Leaders ensure that policies are known and understood by staff and pupils. Suitable monitoring ensures that procedures are closely followed.
13. Leaders and governors actively promote pupils' safety and wellbeing. They are proactive in identifying potential risks to the school and its pupils, and take effective measures to mitigate them. For example, suitable risk assessments are in place that protect vulnerable pupils. The detailed risk assessment policy takes account of the context of the school and is reviewed regularly, helping to keep pupils safe. Leaders have established effective links with other safeguarding partners and agencies, which they consult with in a timely manner to ensure that pupils' wellbeing and safety are prioritised.
14. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. They have produced a detailed accessibility plan which is focused on how the school can make the curriculum and the physical layout of the buildings more accessible to those with disabilities. A key tenet of the school's ethos is respect for all, and the school does not discriminate.
15. Parents are provided with all required information, which is either published on the school's website or else is available from the office. Parents receive written reports on their children's progress and attainment twice a year. They have opportunities to speak to staff in the biannual consultation meetings, as well as informally throughout the school year. Parents of children in the early years are kept informed through an online reporting programme which allows them to see evidence of their children's activities almost as soon as they take place. Staff are readily available to parents for both formal and informal discussions.
16. Complaints are handled appropriately and in line with the school's policy. The proactive proprietor and leadership team are highly visible within the school and are readily available to parents. The vast majority of issues are successfully addressed at an early stage, so resolving them before they become formal complaints.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders have devised and implemented a broad, interesting and challenging curriculum. Leaders regularly review the curriculum and make changes to improve the quality of provision. A recent initiative is a focus on individualised learning aimed at raising pupils' achievement level, by tailoring teaching more closely to individual pupil's needs. The curriculum is appropriate to pupils' ages and aptitudes. It equips pupils well for their future lives.
19. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly to match pupils' needs and abilities and build upon their prior knowledge. Resources, such as interactive whiteboards, are used effectively to enhance pupils' learning and to maintain and stimulate their interest. Pupils are highly motivated to learn and they apply themselves diligently and responsibly. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and this fires pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
20. Alongside a suite of baseline tests, the formal assessment programme enables leaders to track pupils' academic performance, set individual targets and to intervene when necessary. Standardised tests show that pupils make good progress, and they are successful in securing places at the senior school of their choice.
21. Pupils throughout the school develop strong linguistic, literacy and numeracy skills through the daily focus on these areas of learning. For example, early years staff are adept at modelling language to enrich children's communication skills so that they use a wide range of interesting vocabulary. Pupils speak confidently and fluently on a range of topics. The information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum is taught effectively and ensures that pupils have the computing skills they need. Aesthetic and creative skills are developed through stimulating lessons in art and music and pupils display high levels of understanding and skill.
22. Children in the early years make good progress across all seven areas of learning and achieve good levels of development. They become active learners who are curious and independent. Systematic teaching about the sounds letters make helps children get off to a strong start with learning to read. Classroom spaces and the outdoor area provide a stimulating environment which aids children's personal, social and physical development.
23. Leaders have devised an approach to providing feedback which focuses on praise and encouragement. Areas for improvement are clearly highlighted and pupils respond to comments and correct any errors. Teachers pose challenging questions that encourage pupils to think deeply about their work. The feedback provided boosts pupils' understanding and helps them make good progress. However, the approach is not always followed consistently. Occasionally, the feedback pupils receive does not follow the policy and does not help them deepen their understanding and improve their work.
24. Pupils who have SEND or who speak EAL are identified promptly and their needs are carefully assessed. The learning support department produces detailed individual education plans (IEP) which are shared with staff. The plans provide teachers with information about pupils' needs and how best to meet them. Pupils who have SEND, in the early years, are supported effectively by staff who know and understand their needs and use resources appropriately.

25. There is a suitable programme of extra-curricular activities which further enhances pupils' development. Pupils who attend these sessions develop their skills playing football and chess or honing their singing, dancing and drama skills.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

26. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

27. Mutual respect is a key principle of the school's ethos and is understood and embraced by all. From the early years onwards, the importance of respect for all people, regardless of their race, religion or other characteristics is continually reinforced.
28. Leaders have devised a curriculum which ensures that pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. In religious education (RE), pupils develop their spiritual understanding by learning about other religions. They are given regular opportunities to think about and discuss philosophical questions, such as how people's faith can be tested and the attitudes of different religions towards the environment.
29. The PSHE and relationships education curriculums are thorough and the content well considered. Careful thought is given to ensuring sensitive issues like misogyny, child-on-child abuse, consent, contraception, abortion, gender identity and sexual orientation are delivered effectively and at an appropriate age. Discussions around topics such as body image help pupils grow in confidence. Pupils learn to ask open questions through 'wonder' sessions, which encourage pupils to think deeply about topics and to explore them further. They explore concepts of right and wrong and develop a strong moral code.
30. In the early years, children learn how to speak confidently and to listen to the views of others. They quickly make friends and enjoy greeting each other at the start of the day. Children feel happy and secure within the setting and trust the adults looking after them. They grow in confidence as they successfully master skills such as riding their tricycles round the playground.
31. Pupils develop their self-knowledge and confidence through a curriculum which offers opportunities for them to achieve. There are a number of school councils, such as the eco and health councils, which meet regularly. Their achievements are celebrated by blue plaques that are put up around the playground detailing their successes. Other pupils act as prefects and house captains, and older pupils listen to younger ones reading.
32. Pupils are well behaved and live up to leaders' high expectations of them. Staff are polite and caring, and pupils follow this example. Pupils listen politely and respectfully to each other. They take responsibility for their own behaviour in a natural and unforced way. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with effectively. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable. There is very little bullying and incidents are dealt swiftly and appropriately when they do occur.
33. Leaders and governors place a high emphasis upon keeping pupils safe. An external company is contracted to perform an annual health and safety audit which includes checking all fire equipment and procedures. Records are detailed and up to date. The school premises are well maintained. Supervision rotas are carefully planned to ensure that sufficient staff are deployed, including in the early years.
34. Admissions and attendance registers are suitably maintained. Any absences are routinely followed up. The local authority is duly informed if pupils move to another school or if there are any prolonged, unauthorised absences.

35. First aid is delivered in a timely manner, when necessary. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. Policies and procedures are closely followed and detailed records are kept.
36. There is a suitable programme of physical education, utilising both the school's own playground and facilities in a nearby sports ground. There is a changing programme of activities according to the time of year, and pupils learn a variety of sports skills including athletics and dance. Pupils hone their swimming skills in a local pool. This contributes to the pupils physical and mental health.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 37. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

38. Consistent promotion of the school's values helps pupils to develop an understanding of each other's emotions. They start to develop an awareness of the feelings of others from an early age. Children in the early years learn to take turns and to share, for example, by contributing to the daily shared fruit tray. Pupils learn to include others in their games and to share play equipment and other resources.
39. The school is proud of its multi-cultural character and actively promotes the benefits of a diverse pupil and teaching body. Pupils are taught to respect and celebrate the differences between people. They enjoy learning about and celebrating each other's cultures, languages and rituals. Pupils are highly sociable and relationships between them are warm and trusting.
40. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about the wider world. Leaders make effective use of trips to broaden pupils' experiences and enhance their learning. Older pupils attend residential trips, such as to France, which help to develop their cultural understanding. Pupils have a strong understanding of the values which define Britain. Pupils learn about democracy in PSHE lessons and see it in practice when electing their peers onto one of the four different school councils. Pupils value that their voices are heard on a variety of topics and are proud when they successfully lobby for change.
41. The school actively supports the local community in a variety of ways. There is a regular programme of litter picking in the local areas, which helps keep the streets and the park tidy. Through the eco-committee, pupils are actively involved in considering what the school can do to reduce its carbon footprint. The school is part of a sustainable travel scheme and have achieved a gold award for reducing car use. The school supports a range of local and national charities. These are chosen by the pupils, who also decide how they will raise money for them.
42. Economic education is taught well so that, by the time they leave the school, pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of economic matters. They understand why some things are more expensive than others and the need to budget sensibly. The youngest children learn about the value of money through their numeracy lessons. Older pupils take part in the 'enterprise' project in which they invest £5 in a scheme of their own choosing, aiming to make a profit for charity. This helps them develop business, financial and entrepreneurial skills.
43. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for the next stage in their education, both within the school and as they move on to senior school. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop leaderships skills. For example, house captains understand their roles and undertake them maturely.
44. In the early years, a rich range of activities and play opportunities support children's social development. For example, children learn to share and take turns when using toys both in the classroom and the outside area. In PE sessions and 'make and take' clubs, children learn to work together.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

45. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

46. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are robust. They are effectively implemented and meet the Standards. The school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and written in line with current guidance. It is published on the school's website.
47. Leaders have created a positive and open culture in which safeguarding is of the highest importance. Leaders and staff understand the need for vigilance and there is an appreciation that 'it could happen here'. Staff and leaders are well trained, including in the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism, and they understand the training they receive. They know, understand and follow the school's procedures if they suspect that a child is the victim of any type of abuse or neglect, including child-on-child abuse. New staff receive a thorough induction into the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, and all staff receive regular update training.
48. Leaders have established effective links with local safeguarding partners and agencies, and make any necessary referrals promptly. Leaders follow guidance closely when safeguarding concerns arise, including any related to allegations against staff. Safeguarding records are detailed and kept securely.
49. Pupils say they feel safe in their school. They are given a range of methods to raise any concerns they may have, including talking directly to staff, placing a note in a 'worry' box or emailing staff directly. The warm and trusting relationships they have with staff enable them to feel confident that any concerns they have will be listened to and acted upon.
50. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Teaching about online safety is embedded across the curriculum and is regularly discussed in assemblies and in class time. The school has appropriate systems for the filtering and monitoring of online content, which are overseen by leaders and governors.
51. Governors carry out an annual review of all matters pertaining to safeguarding, providing strong and effective oversight. They ensure that leaders apply safeguarding procedures effectively and respond consistently to any concerns raised.
52. Safer recruitment checks are carried out for all staff prior to commencement of employment. These checks are suitably recorded in a single central register, supported by evidence kept in staff files. Regular oversight of these records by leaders ensures that employment procedures are strictly adhered to.
53. Leaders and governors have a thorough understanding of risk. Leaders' assessments of potential risks to pupils and the site are specific to the school and the local area. They ensure that robust and thorough measures to mitigate risks are in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Martin's School
Department for Education number	302/6077
Address	St Martin's School 22 Goodwyn Avenue Mill Hill London NW7 3RG
Phone number	0208 959 1965
Email address	info@stmartinsmillhill.co.uk
Website	www.stmartinsmillhill.co.uk
Proprietor	Mrs Joanna Wilson
Chair	Mr Toby Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Mbah
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	100
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 January 2020

Information about the school

55. St Martin's is a co-educational day school for pupils aged three to eleven years in Mill Hill, London. It was founded in 1920 and moved to its current location in 1940. The school is based in a detached house with additional classroom facilities within the grounds. The current proprietor took over in January 2017. There is a governing body which offers advice and support to the proprietor and leadership team.
56. There are 17 children in the early years which comprises one Nursery and one Reception class.
57. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. English is an additional language for eight pupils.
59. The school states its aims are to create a family atmosphere in which everyone is valued as an individual and feels safe and happy. It strives to ensure that pupils are respectful of one another's thoughts and opinions, while encouraging them to be the best they can be in all areas of learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 May 2024

60. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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