



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**St Martin's School**

**March 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	St Martin's School			
<b>DfE number</b>	312/6005			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312648			
<b>Address</b>	St Martin's School 40 Moor Park Road Northwood Middlesex HA6 2DJ			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 825740			
<b>Email address</b>	office@stmartins.org.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Simon Dunn			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Andrew Harris			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	399			
	<b>EYFS</b>	81	<b>Pre prep Years 1 to 2</b>	80
	<b>Prep junior Years 3 to 6</b>	182	<b>Prep seniors Years 7 to 8</b>	56
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22 to 25 March 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Located in a suburb of north-west London, St Martin's School is a preparatory school for male pupils. It is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. The head was appointed in 2019. Since the previous inspection, the timetable has been restructured and both the school management and governance structures have been reorganised. A new computing room has been created and there is increased use of online resources in learning and teaching. A nature reserve has been created, and the outdoor provision for the EYFS has been upgraded.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school sets out to provide its pupils with a broad education and range of experiences within a happy, safe and friendly environment, so as to enable them to realise their full potential and be well prepared for the future. It sets out to promote the values of honesty, integrity, respect and humility.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 The school's own assessment and its use of nationally standardised tests indicate that pupils throughout the school are of above average ability.
- 1.5 There are 34 pupils with an identified special educational need or disability (SEND), mostly of conditions such as dyslexia, processing speed difficulty or difficulty with verbal communication. They are supported within the classroom by teachers and personal learning plans created by the learning works department. There are 25 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), two of whom receive additional support. The school ensures that all pupils are supported in reaching their full potential by providing work with suitable levels of challenge within classrooms, grouping by prior attainment in some subjects, and enrichment activities.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils in Nursery to Year 6 receive relationships education in the school and those in Years 7 and 8 receive relationships and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils make excellent academic progress across the curriculum, many working at levels above expectations for their age.
- They are ambitious to achieve and eager to know how to improve their work.
- They are highly creative, especially in making music and in their use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils have an excellent attitude to learning, showing both great initiative and collaborative skills in their determination to achieve success.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have excellent levels of self-confidence and empathy, avoiding any suggestions of arrogance.
- They are resilient and highly reflective, with a clear awareness that the decisions they make will directly affect their success.
- They are tolerant and supportive of each other, valuing the range of backgrounds and beliefs that make up the school community.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement.

- Support pupils' ability to improve their work and reach their full potential by consistent use of the excellent feedback practice seen in some departments.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils achieve high academic standards, reflecting the school's success in meeting its aim to enable pupils to fulfil their potential. Each year, pupils succeed in entrance examinations to senior schools with high standards of entry, a number winning academic, sporting, music or all-rounder scholarships. The nationally standardised tests used to assess progress, supported by the school's own assessments, indicate that pupils make excellent progress. Children in the EYFS meet the expected levels of development by the end of Reception. Virtually all pupils in Year 6, including those with SEND, achieve results which are above or significantly above the expectations for those taking similar tests. The



school views all its pupils as able or talented in some area and encourages them to accept extra challenge in classroom work and co-curricular activities. In their response to the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents expressed satisfaction with their children's education and progress.

- 3.6 The pupils flourish in the opportunities offered by the broad education and happy, disciplined learning environment which the school aims to create. They rapidly develop high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the range of subjects. Children in Reception write with excellent letter formation and understanding of sentence structure; by Year 4, pupils are writing extended pieces with an unusually mature range of vocabulary and excellent punctuation. Pupils show a steadily growing understanding of scientific concepts, geographical processes and of the events which have shaped the modern world. They are intellectually curious from the beginning of their days at school; children in Reception confidently ask for definitions of new words encountered in a story. Older pupils, especially those in Years 6 to 8, are ambitious to succeed and want not just to know but to understand why. They are appreciative of the detailed marking and feedback given in many subjects and say they are frustrated when there is a mark but no suggestions on how to improve further. Their physical skills progress well, from those developed by manipulating small objects in Nursery to the determined improvement in football and swimming skills enjoyed by older pupils. The pupils' creative abilities are developed to excellent levels in their art, design and technology (DT) projects and especially in music. Pupils were welcomed into school on their last few days of term by informal outdoor performances of Djembe drumming, songs from *The Sound of Music*, and renaissance pieces played by a chamber orchestra of strings, orchestra, brass and percussion. In all their learning, pupils are supported by teaching which has high expectations of pupils' focus and behaviour, combined with an ability to make learning fun.
- 3.7 The pupils are excellent communicators. Even the youngest confidently engage in conversation with visitors, asking their names and why they are visiting. Pupils' verbal skills develop as they are given frequent opportunities to express their ideas, initially in their class and later to larger audiences; pupil school leaders delivered reports on the term's successes to the entire prep school in the final assembly. Pupils speak clearly and fluently in English; they speak French with an excellent accent. Children in Reception write short sentences with excellent letter formation, and pupils in Year 2 are excited by their success in creating their own illustrated book about a favourite superhero. Older pupils' written work shows their rapid acquisition of sophisticated vocabulary and their pleasure in language choice. Pupils in Year 8 spoke of their pleasure in writing poetry after reading some of that of famous poets. All pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to their peers, raising hands and waiting respectfully to take their turn. In debates on whether following rules is more important than making people happy, their concentration was encouraged by the teachers' use of visual aids; pupils fully understood that the one who held the knitted aubergine spoke and no-one else.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly confident in numeracy skills. Children in the Nursery had no difficulty in counting out five cubes before adding or taking one away to count the result. Pupils in Year 2 created number sentences on fractions, turning a calculation based on division into one of multiplication with assurance. Others experimented with comparative weights, noting conclusions such as eight pieces of lego is equal to ten blocks. Their thinking was taken further when prompted to consider whether the size of the lego pieces mattered. In the prep school, pupils are enthusiastic and highly capable mathematicians, some of them working at a level well in advance of their age. Pupils at the top of the school say that they see mathematics as fundamentally important in everyday life. They explained how they use it in scientific calculations, in organising data in creating spreadsheets and in working out angles to succeed in a DT task.
- 3.9 Pupils use ICT with great confidence and skill. Children in the pre-prep confidently programme computerised toys to perform specific moves and use simple games on handheld devices. Older pupils' skills have been deepened by the experience of remote learning during the periods of school closure, and they now take the use of online learning platforms to produce and access work for granted. This has been facilitated by the leadership's investments in increased resources, including a new computer

room. Pupils use desktop and handheld devices with ease. In their talks on their chosen topic, pupils in Year 6 used online programs to create presentations which incorporated slides, text, still images and video clips to excellent effect. Pupils are skilled at using the internet to research and do not rely solely on search engines; for example, pupils had used an online game to visualise and create a virtual building before creating it in physical form for a DT project. The fluency with which pupils in Year 4 spoke about detecting fake news and how to check sources shows the school's success in teaching pupils to use the resources of the virtual world appropriately.

- 3.10 Their ability to draw together information from a range of sources and apply it imaginatively is a demonstration of the pupils' excellent study skills. Children in Reception were quickly able to recognise the patterns in their numeracy task and to create their own successfully. Pupils are skilled in reflecting on what they are doing, such as pupils in Year 2 considering the impact of changing the size of objects to be balanced against a set number of blocks. In a lesson in Year 5, pupils were adept at identifying the similarities between the processes needed to create calligraphic Islamic art and illustrated manuscripts of other religious traditions. Throughout the school, the pupils show an ability to think reflectively and carefully. A pre-prep class asked questions about current events in the world; skilful adaptation of a lesson helped them understand more. In a form-time debate in Year 5, pupils showed an excellent ability to reflect in a profound way on rules and what being a good person actually means.
- 3.11 Pupils' academic and other achievements are considerable. Pre-prep pupils are proud to share what they have been learning; for example, pupils in Year 2 were eager to explain that they were going to laminate the pages of their book so that then people could buy it. Each year several pupils in the senior years are offered scholarships by their next schools, and pupils succeed in the Maths Challenge up to the Kangaroo level for high performers. Pupils are equally proud of their successes within the school, such as winning an internal scholarship or being the first in their year to win a gold certificate for the number of rewards earned for their work. Successes beyond the classroom proliferate. Several pupils take music grade examinations, individuals passing with distinction and some reaching grade eight standard. Teams are successful in a range of sports, including football, table tennis, and hockey; the Under-11 basketball team were runners-up in the National Basketball Finals.
- 3.12 In all areas of school life, pupils have an excellent attitude to learning, with an equally well-developed ability to work together or independently. Virtually every parent agrees that their children develop the teamwork, collaborative and research skills they will need in later life. Behaviour throughout is excellent, with any exuberance managed by a quiet word or look from staff. Children in the EYFS shared equipment and tasks cheerfully in their imaginative role play, helping each other to create their pizzas and deliver them to the customers. Older pupils worked together extremely well in pairs and small-group tasks. They support each other in improving their work, seen in physical education (PE) as they practised throwing and catching skills and in English when they gave constructive criticism of each other's work. An assembly on surprises showed the pupils' excellent teamwork in the orchestra and also in creating a flash-mob performance of *Panis Angelicus*, with one voice starting and others gradually joining in. Pupils demonstrate considerable ability to show initiative and think for themselves. The independent projects produced by pupils in Year 6 showed their breadth of interests, from comic book heroes to modern history. During the inspection, a small group of pupils created a mini-enterprise business, drawing on their individual skills to raise money in support of Ukrainian refugees.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate excellent self-confidence and self-esteem, developed through their teachers' consistently encouraging approach and the numerous opportunities pupils are given to share their ideas and skills with others. In the pre-prep, pupils are regularly encouraged to perform the music or

the poem they are learning in extra-curricular lessons to the rest of the class. Older pupils enthusiastically volunteer in activities and suggest answers in lessons. In form time activities seen, pupils were eager to be involved in discussions, and teachers were careful to make sure that all had the chance to offer their views. Pupils say that such experiences help them to grow in self-esteem. Pupils are keen to take advantage of the opportunities to challenge themselves, for example by standing for the school council or for positions as prefects or head boy. They are encouraged at all stages to reflect on their own work, the progress they are making and the ways in which they can improve. Target setting is the norm from Year 1; pupils create personal and academic targets and at the end of term reflect on how well they have or have not met them. In this way, they are developing the academic skills which they will need for the next stage of their education. Their self-awareness helps them to reflect on their friendships as well as their work, and this ability to empathise enables them to be proud of themselves without becoming arrogant.

- 3.15 From an early stage, pupils start to learn that the decisions they make will affect the degree of their success. Children in the EYFS select their activities in the free-flow sessions and work out how they can best succeed, for example by asking a friend to help them carry something too cumbersome or by pouring more water down the water channel to make their boat move more freely. Older pupils show an intelligent ability to think through the various elements of a problem to reach a successful conclusion. This was evident in the approach of pupils in Year 4 to the DT task of creating pencil holders and a science experiment in Year 7 on density. Pupils say that they value the way in which teachers set them a task and then let them make their own decisions about how to succeed. The oldest pupils have thought carefully about which will be the best school for them, showing self-knowledge and ambition in their choices. Pupils apply to become members of the school council or eco committee because they know that this will enable them to have a direct impact on school life for all.
- 3.16 Pupils show a firm understanding of different aspects of spirituality and an appreciation of the non-material. Across the school, pupils join the hymn singing in assemblies with gusto and use the moments of silent reflection respectfully. Their understanding of spirituality draws on the school's great success in preserving its Christian ethos while valuing and celebrating all that is contributed by its multi-cultural mix. Those who come from families with a firm faith enjoy sharing the customs and traditions of these with their peers. There is a real appreciation of beauty evident in pupils, from the pre-prep pupils' excitement at seeing caterpillars turn into butterflies to the wholehearted pleasure in music-making and art evident throughout the school. There were quiet gasps of awed admiration from pupils in Year 5 as they watched a video of a calligrapher creating art out of Arabic script. Pupils thoroughly enjoy grappling in form time with 'sticky questions', providing an introduction to abstract thinking about what really matters in life. Older pupils have concluded that the way to have a successful life is to be the best kind of person you can be.
- 3.17 Pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and a strong sense of fairness. Children in the EYFS settle on the carpet quickly so that all can hear and see as their teachers are speaking. Pupils in Year 2 have the maturity to ask to change their place if they know they will be distracted if they stay where they are. The behaviour of older pupils is also based on their understanding of themselves and of the moral codes which underpin a well-ordered community. They admit that a childish fear of consequences might stop them from owning up to a misdeed but, if a friend were blamed, they would have no hesitation in admitting their responsibility. In their everyday interactions with each other, they show clear respect for the school rules and kindness to each other.
- 3.18 Pupils are very skilled at working together. The children in Reception know the importance of sharing and taking turns. They support each other, for example helping a friend to find enough of the objects needed to create recurring patterns. Older pupils enjoy a healthy sense of competition, as in a basketball lesson in Year 8 or in chess club, but they also show excellent ability to work together. In an improvised drama activity, pupils in Year 8 took it in turns to work in a pair to create a scenario which was halted at a dramatic point, to be continued by another pair. The ability to listen to each other and work together are skills emphasised in teaching across the board. Pupils' highly developed

ability to do so supports them in achieving excellent standards in lessons as well as in orchestral and choral performances.

- 3.19 Pupils are keen to take on roles of responsibility, such as joining the school council, the eco committee or becoming charity representatives. They say that taking on these responsibilities is beneficial in growing their confidence as well as contributing to the school community. They appreciate the chance to make suggestions in these committees, although the final decisions are made by staff. Pupils say they enjoy the activity days which allow them to raise money for the school charity; however, not all were clear on what the current charity is or for which causes they have raised money in the past. They show an empathetic understanding of how difficult life can be for others and can use their initiative when fired by a cause, as with the fund raising for Ukrainian refugees. Those who are appointed as school prefects or heads of patrols carry out their duties assiduously, helping those in younger forms or leading visitor tours with pride. The way in which they conduct themselves earns the respect of others and makes them fine role models for their juniors.
- 3.20 Pupils are very clear in asserting that racism or discrimination in any form is totally unacceptable. Parents are virtually unanimous in agreeing that the school promotes respect and tolerance. The commitment of school leadership to developing these qualities underpins the respectful and happy relationships between different cultures in the school. Pupils say that in this school it is easy to fit in regardless of faith, background, ability or personal preferences, reflecting the school's success in meeting its aims. They enjoy learning about the traditions and customs of cultures other than their own. Their pleasure in making or listening to music is evident, whether it is European classical music, African drumming or jazz.
- 3.21 Pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance of living safe and healthy lives. They know how important it is to follow safety instructions, whether in lining up sensibly in Nursery or in using equipment safely in DT and science in the prep school. Pupils in pre-prep know the importance of hygiene and washing their hands; they understand why they have fruit, not sweets or biscuits at break time. Pupils across the school enjoy the nutritious school lunches, knowing that they give them the energy they need for the lively games and sports of their school day. Older pupils are aware of the need to maintain their mental as well as their physical health. They carefully follow the mindfulness exercises with which life studies lessons begin, focusing on their breathing and calming their minds. They use these strategies amongst others to help them manage the busyness of their lives and maintain their equilibrium.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan

Reporting inspector

Mrs Nathalie Hart

Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)