

St Martin's School Brentwood

Hanging Hill Lane, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2HG

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have not ensured that the outstanding quality of education identified at the previous inspection has been maintained. Leaders have faced considerable difficulties in recruiting teachers in a small number of subjects, including science.
- Leaders have sustained the high quality of education in subjects such as English, mathematics and the creative arts. Subject leaders play their part in maintaining excellence where it exists or bringing about improvements where it does not. They have designed a rich and varied curriculum that serves pupils well.
- Pupils make good or better progress in many subjects in all year groups. They make very strong progress in some areas, such as English, the creative arts and mathematics. In other subjects, their progress is typically good. Pupils' attainment is often high.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time is good in many subjects. In some subjects, such as English and the creative arts, it is often outstanding. In a few key stage 3 classes in science and in some humanities subjects, the quality of teaching over time is not as strong as it is elsewhere.
- The sixth form is exceptionally well led and provides an outstanding quality of education. Students' personal development is thoughtfully provided for and they make excellent progress by the end of key stage 5.
- Pupils, including those in need of additional support, are very well cared for. Pastoral leaders are very effective in their work.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, courteous and supportive of each other in lessons. Pupils of all ages mix easily when moving around the school site.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making securely improving progress because of the increasingly effective support they receive. A small number do not attend school as often as they should.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well cared for. However, leaders do not ensure that teachers in some classes meet these pupils' academic needs consistently.
- The governing body and trustees have a secure understanding of the quality of education provided. They use this information to challenge and support leaders well. Governors and trustees recognise the need to focus even more clearly on the progress pupils make across the curriculum in all year groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that the quality of teaching over time in some key stage 3 classes in science, geography and history is as effective as it is elsewhere.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that those responsible for governance focus even more on the progress pupils make in a range of subjects
 - reviewing the strategies teachers use to support pupils with SEND to ensure that they help pupils make the progress they should.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and well-being, by taking further effective action to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not attend as often as they should.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have not ensured that the outstanding quality of education has been maintained since the previous inspection. Significant difficulties in recruiting teachers and, on occasion, leaders, led to a decline in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in a small number of subjects. Nevertheless, leaders' effective actions are helping provision to improve in these subjects and strong practice has been maintained in several others.
- Despite the recruitment challenges they face, leaders have maintained their unwavering belief that education at St Martin's School should include: positive relationships; high standards of behaviour and care; and a curriculum that puts pupils' best interests first. In very many areas, leaders ensure that this is the case.
- Leaders have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education and the progress pupils make. Leaders use this information effectively to provide staff with support, training and challenge to bring about improvements. The impact of leaders' work is evident in the recent improvements in teaching, learning and assessment in science and humanities subjects.
- Leaders have invested significant time and resources in developing a good-quality and wide-ranging training programme for staff. Most teachers agree that this training and opportunities to share good practice every fortnight have improved their teaching. Additionally, through the school's talent management programme, leaders successfully help teachers to develop their leadership skills and knowledge.
- Subject leaders play their part in maintaining or improving the quality of education, including where it is already first rate. For example, leaders in English and mathematics carefully allocate teaching resources to ensure that pupils of all abilities are successful in their learning. Within science, leaders rightly amended the order in which topics are taught, so pupils better gain the knowledge and skills they need. This has led to pupils making good progress across key stage 4.
- Pastoral leaders are very effective. They share the headteacher's commitment that pupils' education should be enriching and supportive. Year leaders are well trained and have a precise understanding of pupils' attributes and social, emotional and academic needs. These leaders keep a watchful eye over each year group, providing individuals with support, encouragement or reward as appropriate. Pupils voiced their appreciation of pastoral leaders' work.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is underpinned by the school's values, which include a focus on strong academic achievement. Inspection evidence shows that the curriculum provides pupils of all abilities with equality of access to learning across a broad range of subjects. Subject leaders ensure that the key stage 3 curriculum provides pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to achieve well at key stage 4. In many subject areas, this is skilfully achieved. However, in a few key stage 3 classes in history, geography and science, the curriculum has not been implemented as well as it could have been.
- Pupils warmly praise the breadth of sporting, artistic and academic clubs on offer

during and at the end of the school day. Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility and understanding of decision-making processes through fund-raising activities and their work as prefects. Pupils also gain a mature appreciation of life in modern Britain within the taught curriculum, such as through discussions of democratic institutions, right and wrong, and globalisation.

- Leaders are making progressively more effective use of the funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are more effective in making sure that teachers understand pupils' barriers to learning, and support them to make good or securely improving progress.
- Leaders make sure that the Year 7 catch-up funding is allocated efficiently. Leaders check its impact carefully and make appropriate adjustments to the support pupils receive. Pupils in receipt of the additional help leaders put in place make significant gains in their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills.
- Leaders take care to check the progress, attendance and well-being of the very small number of pupils on roll who are educated in alternative provision. They maintain thorough records of these frequent and regular checks.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is knowledgeably led. Pupils are well cared for and their needs are quickly identified. Leaders then provide pupils with appropriate support. However, there remains unevenness in how effectively teachers provide for these pupils in lessons in different subjects. Pupils with SEND are making better progress, but it remains too irregular.
- A small number of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would not recommend the school to other parents and carers. However, evidence from the school's own surveys of considerably larger numbers of parents shows that the overwhelming majority are happy with the quality of education provided at St Martin's School.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Those responsible for governance clearly understand their respective roles and carry them out diligently.
- The trust board maintains an accurate strategic overview of the quality of education and, where necessary, poses pertinent questions to leaders and governors. For example, the trust has challenged leaders to further reflect on the design and content of the curriculum to ensure that it continues to meet pupils' changing needs.
- The governing body has undergone a period of significant, planned change to its structure and personnel. Governors have continued to challenge and support leaders, including over the effectiveness with which leaders use additional government funding. Governors acknowledge that they need to pay even greater attention to the progress pupils make in all subjects.
- Governors carefully scrutinise information that leaders give them and use this information to check the level of support that leaders provide for pupils and staff. Individual governors visit the school to assure themselves of the accuracy of what they are told. For example, governors carry out spot-checks to confirm that the school is meeting its obligations to keep pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, promote a culture in which adults are alert to their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Staff receive suitable training and are aware of the risks pupils face. Staff know the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm and understand the importance of reporting concerns quickly and accurately.
- Staff, school records and discussions with local authority officers confirm that leaders take appropriate action when concerns are reported to them. Leaders work extensively with external agencies to ensure that pupils get the best possible help when they need it.
- Pupils of all ages said that they feel safe at school, including when moving around the large school site. They explained that this is due, in part, to the presence of staff supervising at break- and lunchtimes.
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop a thorough understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of settings, including when using the internet. Inspection evidence supports the opinion of one pupil that, 'We are well prepared to judge risks'.
- Pupils also said that staff make sure that they understand about bullying and the forms it can take. A small number of parents expressed concern that incidents of bullying are not dealt with effectively. Pupils said that, while there are a few incidents, staff deal with these appropriately. Inspection evidence confirms that leaders take appropriate action in dealing with any incidents of bullying than may occur.
- Governors are diligent in ensuring that leaders carry out necessary checks on staff working at the school. The record of these checks is maintained accurately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Making good use of leaders' accurate assessment information, teachers know pupils' capabilities and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Teachers plan learning that enables pupils, including those who are most able, to make good progress in many subjects, and outstanding progress in some.
- Teachers typically establish harmonious and productive relationships in which pupils develop increasing self-assurance in their learning. Within this positive learning environment, pupils acquire knowledge and skills securely. Staff often encourage them to take risks in their learning.
- Because of good-quality training and their desire to improve their practice, teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and how to teach them. They also have a thorough understanding of the phases that they teach. Teachers use this knowledge to plan learning sequences that interest and challenge pupils of all abilities. In the best practice over time, such as in the English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and creative arts faculties, this results in many pupils making strong progress.
- Many teachers make skilled use of questioning to encourage pupils to think more deeply and broadly about their work. Where this is the case, pupils draw on knowledge

learned easily and confidently. For example, pupils in a key stage 3 geography lesson showed great maturity in drawing on their knowledge of demography and globalisation as they discussed issues relating to fair trade.

- In many subjects, teachers consistently use the school's feedback policy and practice. Pupils, including the most able, take heed of their teachers' clear guidance and are often diligent in making improvements to their work.
- Leaders place great importance on the development of pupils' confidence and skills in reading. Many pupils enjoy taking part in, and benefit from, the dedicated reading sessions during the school week. Many speak knowledgeably about the context and characters in the books they choose to read.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time in key stage 3 science and some humanities subjects does not always reach the same good or better standard seen elsewhere. Pupils' work shows that learning activities are sometimes less effectively implemented, and school policies less consistently applied. Consequently, pupils' progress and enthusiasm for learning are sometimes diminished in these subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils, including those in most need of support, are cared for very well. Leaders are diligent in identifying and helping pupils in need of support. Pupils confirmed that they are well cared for and have faith that staff will listen to them should they have any concerns.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is comprehensively provided for through the taught curriculum and other activities. Many pupils develop an interest in, and appreciation for the arts. Pupils also demonstrate confidence when discussing ethical issues from differing religious standpoints. The impact of these activities is seen in the reflective, self-assured behaviour of very many pupils.
- Pupils explained how the school's civics programme equips them with the knowledge that helps them assess risks posed by alcohol and drugs or when using the internet. Where appropriate, subject leaders, such as those in art, amend the curriculum so pupils gain a greater understanding of important aspects of well-being, such as mental health.
- Pupils have access to a detailed and timely programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance. Pupils confidently outlined how this programme had helped them to make informed decisions about their future studies and career path. Very many pupils display the highest aspirations for themselves and for their future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have made plain their high expectations of pupils' behaviour and very many pupils respond admirably to these expectations. One pupil explained that, 'It is morally right to behave well.' Her friends agreed.
- Leaders have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that, where staff are required to correct pupils' behaviour, they do so appropriately and with dignity. Pupils informed inspectors that this is what happens and that teachers are, 'strict, but the right sort of strict'.
- In many lessons, in all years, pupils are enthusiastic, considerate learners who want to achieve their best and are supportive of each other in their learning. Consequently, pupils willingly ask and answer questions knowing that their classmates are respectful of their comments, be they right or wrong.
- Pupils conduct themselves extremely well around the large school site. They mingle together happily and maturely, even at the 'pinch points' around the school, for example when queuing at breaktime for the food that pupils described as 'awesome'.
- In a small number of lessons, mainly when the learning is less skilfully pitched towards pupils' capabilities, some pupils lose focus and become uninterested in their work. Inspectors saw this mainly in a few key stage 3 classes in mathematics, science and some humanities subjects.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is also similar to that found nationally. A small number of pupils, including some in Year 11 and some disadvantaged pupils, do not attend as often as they should.
- A few pupils, including some who join the school at times other than the start of Year 7, take longer to adapt to leaders' high expectations of their behaviour. As a result, incidents that lead to fixed-term exclusions are higher than is nationally the case.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with prior attainment that is typically in line with, or above, that of other pupils nationally. Many pupils currently attending school make at least good progress from these starting points overall in many subjects, and in all year groups. Pupils' attainment is generally high.
- In 2017 and 2018, by the end of key stage 4, pupils made significantly better progress than other pupils nationally in English and mathematics. In 2018, pupils' progress in modern foreign languages was outstanding. Many pupils currently in school make at least good or better progress in these subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in many other subjects in key stage 4. Pupils' impressive progress in art, music and drama reflects the high-quality teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects.
- In 2017, pupils' progress in humanities was broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4. While improved, progress in these subjects remained broadly in line with the national average in 2018. Inspection confirms leaders' accurate assessment that this trend of improvement is continuing for pupils in key

stage 4.

- In 2017, pupils' progress in science, by the end of key stage 4, was below that of other pupils nationally. In 2018, pupils' progress in science improved and it continues to do so and is good. This is because leaders' actions to improve the quality of education in science are bearing fruit.
- While in many subjects pupils make good and sometimes better progress across key stage 3, in a small number of classes in science and humanities, this is not the case. This reflects the less effective teaching practice over time, as well as the school's difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers in these subjects.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils made by the end of key stage 4 compared favourably with that of other pupils nationally in many subjects in 2017. This was not the case in English and mathematics in 2018. Because of leaders' actions, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving securely in many subjects.
- In 2018, the most able pupils made significantly better progress than other pupils nationally in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. They continue to do well in these, and several other subjects. In science and humanities subjects, the most able pupils make progress that is broadly in line with that of other pupils.
- Pupils with SEND did not make the progress they should have by the end of key stage 4 in 2018. The progress of pupils with SEND currently in school is better, but not as consistently strong as it should be.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This is due, in part, to the good-quality information, advice and guidance they receive. This leaves pupils well placed to make informed decisions about their next steps. Higher proportions of pupils remain in education or training than is the case nationally.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The sixth form is exceptionally well led. Leaders have the highest aspirations for their students and have brought about significant improvements to the quality of education in this large sixth form.
- Unhappy with the progress students were making, leaders carried out a thorough review of the curriculum in 2016 and made appropriate amendments to the 16 to 19 study programmes. The impact of leaders' decisions is evident in the excellent progress students made by the end of key stage 5 in 2017 and, based on provisional outcomes, in 2018.
- Teachers have detailed knowledge of their subjects, how the subjects are assessed and how to teach them. They use this information to provide learning that brings the best out of students, including those with high prior attainment.
- Students share their teachers' high aspirations for their achievement. Students are reaping the rewards of the careful way that leaders and teachers check their work and progress. Students' carefully organised folders and books demonstrate that they make strong progress in many subjects.
- Leaders have put in place a high-quality programme of support for students who had not achieved the minimum expected GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics.

Consequently, students make excellent progress towards achieving these qualifications.

- Students demonstrate a mature and conscientious attitude to their learning. They seek help when they feel they need it and respond positively to advice given. Students explained how much they value the fact that, 'Our teachers make time for us whenever we need them to.'
- Leaders make sure that students are provided with the support they need to make knowledgeable decisions about the next stage of their education, training or employment. One student commented that sixth-form staff, 'cannot be faulted' in the lengths they go to in providing help with university applications, interviews or assessments.
- Students attend regularly, and their conduct is exemplary. Their relationships with staff are built on mutual respect and contribute to the harmonious ethos in lessons. Students explained that they are looked after carefully and feel safe on site. They are confident that, should they need pastoral support, staff will provide it willingly.
- Students value having their own study centre on the school site. However, they also take seriously their many roles in supporting younger pupils at the school. Students told inspectors how these roles are carefully matched to their interests and their programmes of study. Leaders also ensure that students have appropriate access to appropriate work-related learning opportunities. However, some students explained that they would appreciate more direction in setting up their work experience placements.
- The sixth form meets the minimum requirements for the 16 to 19 study programmes.

School details

Unique reference number	136875
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10085482

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,746
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	341
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Anthony McGarel
Headteacher	Mr Mike O'Sullivan
Telephone number	01277 238300
Website	www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 May 2013

Information about this school

- St Martin's School is part of the Brentwood Academies Trust.
- The school has a local governing body, made up of 12 governors, with delegated powers of responsibility. The board of trustees oversees the direction of the school and the work of the local governing body.
- The school is considerably larger than the typical secondary school.
- Most pupils are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The percentage of

pupils who have education, health and care plans is in line with that found nationally.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils attending the school is below the national average.
- A very small number of pupils are educated in alternative provision through Tute Virtual School and the Children's Support Service Short Stay School.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was initially scheduled as a one-day inspection conducted by the lead inspector and two Ofsted Inspectors. This converted to a full inspection completed by the lead inspector and six Ofsted Inspectors on the following day.
- The inspectors visited 82 lessons and observed teaching and learning across all year groups. Inspectors also visited tutor time and an assembly.
- The inspection team held meetings with: the executive headteacher; other senior leaders; subject leaders; pastoral leaders; the special educational needs coordinator; teachers; the chair of the governing body; and the chair of the board of trustees. The lead inspector held separate telephone discussions with two representatives of the local authority and with two governors, including the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' and students' work, information on pupils' and students' attainment and progress, curriculum planning, and records of leaders' checks on the quality of education. The inspectors also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents (including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of staff), and the school's website.
- Inspectors held meetings with seven groups of pupils and students, including school council members. Inspectors held informal discussions with many more pupils and students in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspectors took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspection team also considered the response of considerably more parents to the school's own surveys of parents' opinions.
- Inspectors considered the response of staff to the school's own surveys over the previous three years.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Batty	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Lawrence	Ofsted Inspector
Georgina Atkinson	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Osagie	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019