

# St Martins School (3-16 Learning Community)

Moors Bank, St Martins, Oswestry, SY10 7BD

## Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In 2013, standards at the end of Year 11 were low and rates of progress too slow. The current Year 11 are making better progress as a result of closely targeted support.
- The quality of teaching in the secondary phase requires improvement, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers do not consistently plan lessons that sufficiently support less able students or stretch the most able.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and often does not provide sufficient advice on how students can improve their work or how to reach their targets.
- Current timetable arrangements, where students study some subjects for a whole day, do not always enable them to achieve their best.
- Although the acting Principal has clearly identified priorities for improvement, and achievement in the secondary phase is now rising, the new strategies that have been introduced are not yet sufficiently established to have had a sustained impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The new leadership structure is not yet completely in place so teachers are not yet fully held to account for students' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in the primary phase, making good progress as a result of the consistently good teaching they receive.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is good, preparing children well for their learning in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils and students say that they value the good support they receive that ensures they are safe. They say they are well known and that adults care about them.
- Behaviour across the whole school is good. Students are polite and courteous and show enthusiasm for their learning.
- The acting Principal, well supported by her deputy, her senior team and the governing body, has high expectations of staff and students. She has been quick to establish teamwork in this new all-through school, raising staff morale.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, three of which were seen together with one of the school’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, parents, governors, staff, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, the school’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, local authority reports on the performance of the school, records of lesson observations, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 25 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, together with the school’s own survey of the views of parents and carers. Inspectors responded to phone calls and e-mails from parents and also took account of 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elaine Kenney

Additional Inspector

Robert Bourdon-Pierre

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Martins School (3-16 Learning Community) was established in September 2013 when Rhyn Park School and Performing Arts College was amalgamated with Ifton Heath Primary School. When Rhyn Park School was last inspected in 2012 it was judged to be good. Ifton Heath Primary was judged to be satisfactory at its last inspection in 2010.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized all-through school.
- The secondary phase takes approximately half its intake from other providers.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is below average. Very few students speak English as an additional language and none at an early stage.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- A very few pupils receive part-time off-site specialist support from the Harlescott tuition service.
- In 2013, the secondary phase of the school did not meet the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The primary phase met these standards.
- The school is currently based on two sites. The secondary phase is undergoing a rebuild and refurbishment and will be joined later in the year by the primary phase.
- Over the past year, there has been a significant turnover in senior leadership. The acting Principal took up post at the start of January 2014.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
  - sharing the good practice that already exists, particularly in the primary phase, to improve the rigour with which teachers plan their lessons, so that tasks are sufficiently challenging to stretch the most able students and support the least able
  - improving the consistency of written marking so that students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next, and ensuring they have sufficient opportunity to use this advice to improve their work.
- Ensure that the secondary timetable is organised in a way that fully engages students in their learning and provides the maximum opportunity for them to make outstanding progress.
- Establish and secure a leadership structure across the school that promotes high quality teaching, supports learning and ensures that teachers are fully held to account for the progress their students make.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students typically enter the secondary phase of the school with below average basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. By the end of Year 11 in 2013, the proportion the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was below average. Rates of progress in English and mathematics were also below that of other schools during this year.
- New leaders have taken firm action to address this underachievement, including the provision of focused additional sessions in English and mathematics. Saturday morning sessions in mathematics have been well attended, are greatly valued by the students and have established a greater enjoyment in learning. The school's current assessments indicate that standards are rising and that students are now progressing at a much faster pace, particularly in English.
- The school now does not limit students' chances of achieving higher grades by entering them early for their mathematics GCSE, although some of the current Year 11 cohort were entered for GCSE English in November and will have the opportunity to retake the examination if they did not achieve their target grade.
- Children enter the school's Nursery class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are typically below the levels expected for their age, particularly in number and reading, although this varies year on year. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, playing and cooperating well together. They develop well as learners, showing curiosity about the world around them and currently enter Key Stage 1 at broadly the levels expected for their age, their personal, social and emotional development being particularly strong.
- In Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points. In 2013, Key Stage 1 standards were average in all subjects. In Year 6, pupils made rates of progress that were well above pupils nationally. There was a low proportion of more-able pupils in this year group, but nevertheless a greater proportion than nationally gained the higher Level 5 in mathematics. Evidence seen during the inspection and the latest assessments indicate that current pupils are making good progress in all year groups.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is equal to that of their peers in all key stages, as a result of the support they receive which is now well coordinated across the school. There is no significant difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds or the very few who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used appropriately to provide support for those pupils who join the school with low basic skills in numeracy and literacy. One-to-one tuition and reading catch-up sessions are well delivered and are ensuring that students have the skills they need to achieve. During the inspection students were observed reading confidently and with expression. Older students regularly support younger ones in paired reading sessions.
- The gap between the achievement in English and mathematics of pupils and students for whom the school receives additional pupil premium funding and that of their classmates varies across the school. There is currently no appreciable difference between this group and their classmates in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, this group were three quarters of a national curriculum level behind their classmates in mathematics, but a quarter behind in reading and writing. However the pupils eligible for additional funding made much

better progress than their peers in reading and writing although not in mathematics.

- In the secondary phase in 2013, the attainment gap in English and mathematics was approximately one GCSE grade behind their peers and the proportion making expected progress in these two subjects was well behind their peers. During the inspection, it was clear that the performance of this group is a focus for leaders who track their progress with rigour and the gaps are closing across the school. It should be noted however that the small numbers involved make year-on-year comparisons difficult.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching in the secondary phase is inconsistent and in both English and mathematics requires improvement because students are not making sufficient progress in lessons and students' progress over time indicates that they have been underachieving.
- Although action has been taken and closely focused revision sessions are being provided, inspectors observed lessons where opportunities were being missed to provide sufficient challenge for the most able and focus them on what is needed for a high level response. Likewise, because some teachers plan the same task regardless of the differing abilities in their classes, those of lowest ability sometimes find the task too difficult if teaching assistants are not present to support them.
- Students know their target grades or levels but are not so clear on what they need to do to achieve them. Feedback through written marking is inconsistent across the school, particularly so in English and mathematics in the secondary phase, where little detailed information is being provided to ensure that students understand how to develop their work. Opportunities are also being missed to enable students to act upon the advice.
- Inspection evidence showed that all teaching in the primary phase of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, was good or outstanding. In all lessons pupils were observed making good or better progress as a result of their teachers planning tasks that were appropriately challenging to match each ability range. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson, the most able group labelled the 'Einstein' group were expected to tackle a more challenging task involving addition and subtraction of complex decimals. Learning was made fun and memorable though the use of regular repetition of phrases and using comic sounds for example to distinguish between 'tens' and 'tenths'.
- Where teaching is most effective, good subject knowledge and an organised approach enable students to build their skills rapidly during the lesson. Teachers here have high expectations and learning is at a fast pace. For example in a Year 10 dance lesson, students made rapid progress through having a clear understanding of the skills they needed to develop. Good use was made of peer assessment so that students were able to respond to the advice given to improve their performance.
- In the Nursery class teachers quickly establish the fun in learning, however simple the activity, for example, listening to instructions or responding to the register. In one such session observed, the children were asked to count backwards and forwards and to work out how many children would be present if there was one more girl or two less boys.
- Where teaching assistants are present in classrooms, they are well deployed and provide good support, using questioning well and knowing when to stand back and encourage students to develop independence.

- Students were keen to tell inspectors how much they value the support their teachers provide, one saying, 'Teachers care about us.'

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students in all phases of the school is good. They show a great enthusiasm for learning and are keen to do well. This was particularly noticeable in some revision lessons observed where Year 11 students showed interest, enthusiasm and commitment despite the task being dull and not well matched to their ability. They told inspectors how much they value the school's efforts to ensure that they succeed.
- No poor behaviour of any kind was observed during the inspection and students told inspectors that behaviour has dramatically improved since the acting Principal took over. They now have a much clearer understanding of the school's expectations of good behaviour and sanctions are applied appropriately and consistently.
- Behaviour around the school is orderly and calm and students are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Older pupils support younger ones in the primary phase, for example by escorting them to and from assemblies. Students of all ages express pride in their school.
- Students of all ages have a good understanding of the different form that bullying can take but say that incidents are rare and that there is zero tolerance for prejudice of any kind.
- In previous years exclusions have been high but over the last year these have reduced dramatically and sanctions applied more consistently and appropriately. Leaders have recently appointed an inclusion officer to ensure that these are reduced still further and that issues are dealt with in school so that no education is missed.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students and parents agree that the school keeps them safe and there is always someone to whom they can talk. The school provides comprehensive support for students and their families facing challenging circumstances and leaders have worked consistently to improve the attendance of these students. Students attend well cross the school and are punctual to lessons.
- The school has been especially vigilant over safety issues related to the building work and the removal of asbestos from classrooms ensuring that there was no risk to pupils.
- Students were keen to tell inspectors how much the school has improved since January in terms of their well-being. They told inspectors how communications have improved so that they know what they are doing and what is expected of them.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leaders, including governors, have recognised that the previous leadership structure was not fit for purpose and are striving to establish a more appropriate structure for this small all-through school and, in particular, to ensure that adequate subject leadership is put into place to drive improvement in the core subjects.
- The acting Principal, well supported by her deputy and wider senior team, has been quick to identify priorities for improvement, having a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and communicating with staff and pupils her high expectations of all. As a result, good teamwork is now being established across both phases and staff morale has risen with all

staff expressing positive views about the school's work and future.

- The progress of students across the school is rigorously tracked and analysed so that underachievement can be quickly identified and addressed. Although this information is provided for all teachers, they are not currently using this effectively in their planning to ensure that all groups are appropriately targeted.
- Systems are being put in place to better hold teachers to account for the progress made in their classes and the provision of appropriate training and support established to enable the professional development of teachers and support staff. This includes support provided by the local authority, for example expert support for teachers and students in mathematics, and forging partnerships with neighbouring high performing schools, such as providing science sessions for the most able.
- The curriculum that pupils follow in the primary phase is appropriate in its focus on developing their basic skills and the topic work provides realistic and exciting opportunities for them to develop creativity.
- Despite the size of the school, the secondary phase is able to offer a full range of subjects including 'E bacc' subjects, that are balanced by a range of work-related courses, including in the performing arts and construction. However the way that these courses are organised across the secondary phase results in some subjects, for example, humanities, having five consecutive lessons over a whole day. While this provides the opportunity for extended projects to be explored, if a student or staff are absent, this results in a large amount of learning time being lost. Students say that they sometimes get bored having so long for one subject and that the pace of learning is sometimes slow.
- Leaders have established a range of extra sessions to address the underachievement in English and mathematics. This includes voluntary Saturday morning sessions where food is provided and a sense of fun established and is regularly attended by over half the year group.
- The school provides well for students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development, particularly through the arts and humanities and the frequent opportunities to work as part of a team in lessons. A good range of clubs and other activities also enrich learning. The new phase of the building is light and airy offers views of the beautiful surrounding country further promoting spiritual development.
- The primary sports funding is spent appropriately on ensuring that teachers in the primary phase receive training at the same time that their classes are taught by expert practitioners including teachers from the secondary phase.
- The school seeks to fully engage parents in their child's education and in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the primary phase, parents expressed their appreciation of the school's work, when talking to inspectors. They were particularly grateful for the opportunity to tour the new buildings before this phase of the school moves in the summer. Inclusion and learning mentors provide close support for families facing challenging circumstances that continues beyond school.
- The support provided by the local authority has been exceptional and it is this that has ensured that the period of declining achievement has not been allowed to continue. This support has included providing training for governors, providing expert support for subjects and supporting the new leaders in taking the school forward.

■ Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors express a determination that the school will be successful and have taken robust action to ensure that the recent decline was halted. They are well organised and keep a close watch on all aspects of the school's work, providing appropriate challenge and support. They have a wide range of expertise which is increasingly being used to good effect. The progress tracking information is frequently closely monitored and compared with national expectations, health and safety arrangements rigorously checked and the impact of additional funding carefully evaluated. Governors have been diligent in seeking training to enable them to improve the way they carry out their role. For example they are currently seeking training in performance management so that they are better able to support the acting Principal in holding teachers to account.



## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123575
<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	426881

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	489
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Jones
<b>Principal</b>	Sue Lovecy (Acting Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01691 776500
<b>Fax number</b>	01691 776501
<b>Email address</b>	admin@saintmartins.org.uk

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