

St Martins School (3–16 Learning Community)

Moors Bank, St Martins, Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7BD

Inspection dates	24–25 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics declined to 30%, much lower than the national figure. This drop in results was a shock to the headteacher and governors who had been expecting an improvement, based on the data they had been given.
- This year, following significant changes to the way that assessment data is collected and moderated, the school predicts a rise in GCSE results for English and science but not for mathematics.
- Historically, pupils' progress across key stages 3 and 4 has been weak. Currently, pupils in key stage 3 are making better progress, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are broadly average.
- The gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing, but not consistently across all year groups and subjects.
- The heads of department for core subjects in the secondary phase and middle leaders are a newly established and embryonic team. They have put in place many changes to the curriculum, teachers' planning and assessment, but the impact in improved GCSE results is yet to be seen.
- Until very recently, the school has lacked the razor-sharp and precise strategic focus on its achievement and performance data needed to raise academic standards significantly.
- Teaching is not consistently good across all subjects and year groups.

The school has the following strengths

- Outcomes in the early years are good. Pupils make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Pupils are proud of their school and the changes taking place.
- Governance is strong. Governors reacted quickly to the drop in GCSE results and sought support from a local high-performing academy.
- The headteacher has managed the amalgamation of the two schools very well, bringing together two disparate communities. The school has a strong, unified ethos.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes overall and especially in key stages 3 and 4 in mathematics.
- Embed the new national curriculum subjects in key stages 3 and 4.
- Improve leadership and management, especially with regard to assessment, performance data and the use of this information to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Improve teaching and learning to increase stretch and challenge for all pupils, throughout the school.
- An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has brought about a significant improvement in the ethos of the school. Staff morale is high and pupils are proud of their school. She recognises that the job of bringing together the two schools is complete and that the focus needs to shift significantly to raising academic standards.
- The headteacher has not been afraid to tackle difficult staffing issues and restructure the leadership and other teams in order to bring about improvements in performance and teaching.
- At the heart of the GCSE shock in 2015 was the weakness in the data gathered by senior staff and its use. In addition, significant gaps were uncovered in the curriculum for some secondary core subjects, including mathematics. The headteacher has subsequently supported the new subject and middle leaders in their review of subjects. They have identified strengths and areas for development and are in the process of bringing about the required changes.
- Leaders have introduced new measures to improve the reliability of the assessment data produced: these include internal, external and local authority moderation of pupils' work and scores, and the introduction of a new whole-school reading assessment. However, some assessment data is still too informal and does not routinely record, for example, whether pupils are disadvantaged, have a special educational need or disability, are looked after by the local authority, or whether they fit more than one category. That many vulnerable pupils are currently making at least expected, and often better, progress is a feature of this being a small school, where pupils are known personally. As the school expands, the assessment systems need to be more professional.
- The recently introduced curriculum model addresses the needs of all groups of pupils across the age range. It is not yet fully embedded so there is insufficient evidence to evaluate its impact on standards. However, the secondary curriculum and timetables are much improved from those reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 follow the full range of subjects. All subjects have been reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the new GCSEs. Teachers are currently dual-grading pupils' work, using the old GCSE grades and the new until the system is clearer and well embedded. In the primary school, the curriculum is rich and vibrant and follows the national curriculum. Pupils visibly enjoy the cross-curricular themes and trips.
- There is a varied programme of extra-curricular activities to support the formal curriculum. These include theatre visits, university visits, drama groups, physical education (PE) and sports activities, foreign trips, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and revision clubs.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well throughout the school's curriculum. Pupils work in harmony and show respect towards adults and other pupils. They demonstrate tolerance towards others; for example, towards those who have 'come out' about their sexuality. Fundamental British values are taught through assemblies and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons, but more could be done to integrate this work into the wider curriculum.
- The professional development programme is structured to meet the school's priorities. Teachers attend weekly whole-school development sessions in addition to receiving bespoke training to support any specific, additional, areas of concern. They also have the opportunity to take part in external moderation and standardisation visits to good and outstanding schools. Strengths of current teaching staff are modelled and shared with others. All leaders are involved in the design and implementation of the programme.
- Careers advice is effective, impartial and freely available to Year 11 pupils. Discussion with a group of Year 11 pupils showed that they had well-chosen pathways for their time after GCSEs.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are not targeted as well as they could be. Although some gaps between disadvantaged pupils are others are closing, the money is recorded as being spent broadly rather than specifically for individuals. Not all eligible pupils are making the accelerated progress that they need to make.
- The primary sports funding is used appropriately to provide a range of after-school sports clubs and to support non-specialist teachers to deliver PE and sports lessons. 56% of children in key stage 2 attend a sports club; 62% of whom are girls.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors acted rapidly when the 2015 GCSE results were published. They realised that the information and data that they had received from the school had been incorrect. They accepted that, despite her excellent work in bringing the two school communities together into one cohesive unit, the headteacher needed support to raise academic standards rapidly through targeted and precise intervention. At the same time as the local authority issued its pre-warning notice, governors began to explore formal links with other schools locally. They settled on The Priory School, Shrewsbury. Since September 2015, senior staff from The Priory have been supporting staff at St Martins in preparation for a formal move to join the Priory Multi-Academy Trust.
 - Governors supported the headteacher through difficult staffing decisions and action in order to secure stronger leadership of the core subjects. Committees have been reorganised to better reflect the school's priorities. Governors' scrutiny and challenge of data are more robust. The headteacher of a local independent girls' school is a member of the governing body; he adds a particular level of challenge to the discussions about standards. The shock of the 2015 results has increased the pace and sense of urgency driving governors in their work. They are very well supported by the local authority officers with whom they work closely.
 - The governing body meets all its statutory requirements. Governors have a much clearer overview of the quality of teaching and ensure that only those who meet the teachers' standards progress up the pay scale. They know how additional funding is spent but they do not yet have a good understanding of its impact because some of the data collected is still not sharp enough, nor its analysis meticulous enough, to help them ask the right questions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive appropriate training and advice. The school works closely with external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is not yet consistently good: the overall picture is patchy and uneven. In the secondary school, teaching is stronger in key stage 3, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- In the primary phase, the teaching of mathematics is strong. It is stronger than the teaching of reading and writing. Across the school, the introduction of a whole-school approach to reading is beginning to pay dividends, but it is not as focused as it could be. The head of mathematics has recognised that a significant factor in the poor performance in GCSE mathematics has been pupils' weak reading skills.
- Despite the school having a writing and presentation policy, in the primary school handwriting is weak and presentation is poor. Too many pupils form their letters incorrectly and consequently are unable to develop a fluent cursive script. In the primary school, some teachers do not provide a good enough handwriting model for pupils and do not lay out their own work on boards well enough to set the right example for pupils.
- However, across a range of lessons, pupils were able to demonstrate the knowledge and learning that they were acquiring or consolidating. In Year 4, they explained eloquently to the inspector why pupils were evacuated during the Second World War. In Year 6, pupils showed mastery and understanding of multiplication to two decimal places and, in a Year 7 French lesson, lower-ability pupils were able to hold a brief conversation in French.
- Teachers report that expectations are much higher than they were. Recent changes to lesson planning, assessment and sharper professional development are raising expectations about the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Teachers report that the culture has changed – that they are more aspirational for their pupils and for themselves.
- The new planning and marking policies have introduced a consistency of approach across the school although these are used more effectively in some lessons than in others.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject and good subject knowledge. The vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy their lessons. As a result, they have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Until recently, the school sent a group of most-able pupils to the local independent girls' school (Moreton Hall) for science lessons. Several of these pupils have been awarded scholarships to the sixth form following their GCSE examinations. The link with Moreton Hall will continue with the most-able groups in mathematics and science next year. The school's records show that the vast majority of pupils who achieved the higher Level 5 at key stage 2 are on track to achieve well at GCSE. In a top set Year 8

mathematics lesson, the teaching very effectively stretched these most-able mathematicians, who rose to the challenge very well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils increasingly value their education and are proud of their school. High-quality examples of products made in technology lessons and art-work displayed around the school are testimony to pupils' pride in their work, their attention to detail and their acquisition of a range of work-relevant skills.
- Pupils report that there are fewer incidents of low-level disruption in lessons. They are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online. Tutor time, lessons and assemblies regularly focus on aspects of safety, including cyber bullying, online risks and grooming. Pupils reported that some bullying does exist but that it is dealt with swiftly. Cyber bullying is dealt with firmly and appropriately. The school takes all reasonable steps to inform pupils how to keep themselves safe. Through Parent View, the online Ofsted survey, a small number of parents raised their concerns about bullying. Inspectors pursued these concerns in depth. There have been five incidents of recorded bullying, including cyberbullying, this school year. In each case, the school has acted appropriately. Pupils informed inspectors that there has been a 'huge' culture change in the school.
- Pupils report that they feel safe and that there are no 'no-go' areas in the school. Inspectors' observations confirmed this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the building. The school is a very well ordered community.
- Exclusions have halved over the last two years.
- The current proportion of persistent absenteeism is below the the national figure for 2015. It is slightly inflated by the figures for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils for whom the school is the host school. Despite this, most Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils stay on at school to complete their GCSEs.
- Between 2013 and 2015, attendance was above the national average; currently, it is slightly below. The attendance of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils reduces the overall attendance figure by 1.3%.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, pupils did not make enough progress across key stages 3 and 4 and specifically in English, mathematics and science. They made expected progress in the humanities and languages.
- Currently, the picture is mixed. Pupils are making better progress in key stage 3, especially in Years 7 and 8. Here, pupils are making more than expected progress in mathematics and science. Progress in English lags behind that of the other two core subjects. In Years 9, 10 and 11, progress remains patchy and too variable.
- Reading standards are not high enough across key stages 3 and 4. The school knows this and is in the process of changing its reading policy, introducing discrete reading sessions. Until very recently, the school only gathered the reading ages of less-able pupils or those with a special educational needs and disabilities. That policy is changing and the school has recently tested all pupils. The results have not yet been analysed and neither heads of department nor teachers are using them to best effect. The weak reading scores of too many pupils is a major factor in the low GCSE outcomes.
- In 2015, in key stage 2, pupils made broadly average progress but this was not the case for all groups. Disadvantaged pupils made too little progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys made too little progress in writing and pupils who have special educational needs or disability made insufficient progress in mathematics.
- Currently, pupils in the primary school are making more rapid progress, especially in mathematics. Inspectors observed pupils demonstrating mastery of the topics studied in Year 6 and Year 2.

- Standards are rising in key stage 1. Outcomes in reading and mathematics are higher than the national average. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 1 achieved highly in the Year 1 phonics check, narrowing the gap between themselves and others.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making better than expected progress as a result of the good teaching and support they receive. For example, in a Year 10 art lesson, an inspector observed a group of pupils with special educational needs doing well. Pupils could explain the different strategies they used to help them with their art work. They demonstrated positive attitudes to their work, discussed the work of their classmates and offered insightful comments. All were on track to achieve their target grades.
- The most able pupils are making expected progress given their starting points. More of them are being challenged further as a result of the school's greater focus on this group.
- In 2015, too many pupils who left St Martins were not well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. That picture is improving.

Early years provision

is good

- The proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception is increasing year on year. There has been more than a 30% improvement since 2013. Many more children are well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1.
- The gap in attainment between children who have special educational needs or disability and others has reduced considerably.
- The gap in attainment between boys and girls is narrowing but still remains. However, in 2015 boys attained almost as well as all boys nationally – a significant improvement. Staff have identified the need to support boys more in their development of early reading and writing skills and have introduced targeted initiatives to do this. These are having a positive impact.
- Staff assess children on entry to Nursery and at regular intervals thereafter. The assessment system is robust and detailed. Assessments are accurate and are used to plan the next steps in children's learning. The information is shared with parents, who can contribute to the process through the online facility.
- The teaching style in the early years adapts as children move through the school year. During the time of this inspection, children in Reception were able to work together well in groups on adult-led activities, reading simple books and writing.
- The teaching of early reading is very effective. Children begin to learn phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in Nursery. This is built on in Reception so that most children can read simple phonics books independently.
- Children are well cared for, are settled and happy. Children in Nursery initiate conversations with adults and talk freely about what they are doing. They are developing good social and personal skills. They serve themselves from jugs of milk or water and choose a healthy snack. They know to wipe their hands after eating and tidy away their beakers without being told to.
- The early years unit is well led and managed. Staff are evaluative, work well together and know what they need to do next to improve the provision even further.

School details

Unique reference number	123575
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10009259

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	540
Appropriate authority	the governing body
Chair	Tim Jones
Headteacher	Sue Lovecy
Telephone number	01691 776500
Website	www.stmartins3-16.org
Email address	reception@stmartins3-16.org
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

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.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized all-through school.
- The secondary school takes approximately half its intake from other providers.
- A very small number of most-able key stage 4 pupils have regularly attended science lessons at the local independent girls' school, Moreton Hall.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school is a host school for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is average.
- The primary school meets the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The secondary school does not meet the government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.
- The local authority issued the school with a pre-warning notice following the publication of the GCSE results in summer 2015. The governors sought out the support of a local high-performing academy, The Priory Academy, Shrewsbury, at the same time. Staff from The Priory have been supporting their counterparts at St Martins since September 2015.
- School leaders and governors have recently signed an Academy Order to join The Priory Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, including extended observations in the early years unit. Some lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors visited an assembly and observed pupils' behaviour around the school at different times of the day, including breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, heads of core subject departments, middle leaders, subject teachers, groups of pupils, governors and representatives from the local authority.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning and experiences of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation including pupil assessment information, the school's development plan and its self-evaluation, policies, documentary evidence of safeguarding, case studies, external reviews and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of 40 responses to the staff survey and 50 parent responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Angela Westington, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
David Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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