

St Martin's Preparatory School

63 Bargate, Grimsby, Lincolnshire DN34 5AA

Inspection dates

17–19 May 2016

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
Early years provision	Requires Improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor, governors and headteacher are ambitious to drive the school forward. They provide a good quality education for pupils, within a caring and nurturing ethos.
- The proprietor and governors work closely with school leaders, and have a good understanding of the day-to-day running of the school. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2 they achieve standards well above those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching means that pupils make increasingly rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school.
- The headteacher works closely with staff to ensure that they are taking effective action to improve classroom practice and pupils' learning
- Pupils are eager to learn, they enjoy their lessons and respond well to the needs of others. They behave well in classrooms and at playtimes
- Parents, staff and pupils hold the school and the leaders of the school in high regard and value the wide range of subjects that pupils can learn.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In the early years, activities are sometimes not purposeful enough. The input provided by adults lacks sufficient challenge and does not always maximise learning.
- Assessment information in the early years is not analysed sufficiently well and does not show how well different groups of pupils are achieving over time.
- Some middle, and subject, leaders are not fully effective.
- The information used by school leaders to evaluate the links between teaching and the progress of learners sometimes lacks sufficient detail. It does not fully inform school improvement priorities.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the early years by:
 - ensuring that children are clearer about what is expected of them when choosing tasks
 - promoting a greater level of challenge in the activities delivered by adults
 - provide more opportunities for writing, across a wider range of activities
 - evaluating more accurately the assessment information that is gathered in order to identify how well all groups of children are progressing in their learning.

- Further clarify and develop the roles of middle, and subject, leaders to ensure that the best practice seen in the school is shared more widely.

- Continue to refine the information provided to the proprietor and governors by sharpening the links between performance information and the progress that pupils, and all groups of pupils, are making.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **is good**

- The headteacher, proprietor and governors are ambitious for the school and have a strong commitment to improve further. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met. They focus well on ensuring that pupils secure the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed for their secondary school education.
- Led well by the headteacher, school leaders, at all levels, check on the quality of teaching and provide feedback and advice to teachers on a regular basis. Where they identify that practice needs improving, they provide additional support. As a result, much of the teaching continues to improve across the school. However, the quality of this support and challenge varies across phases and aspects of the school and is not consistent. This is because not all middle and subject leader roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Leaders insist on high expectations for behaviour leaders. A programme of learning focuses on bullying in different forms and the impact it has on others. This results in pupils conducting themselves well around the school, and respecting each other.
- The curriculum is engaging for pupils, builds on their interests and contributes well to their learning. Visits, visitors and special events add excitement and variety to pupils' experiences. In addition to planned personal and spiritual development opportunities, pupils engage in critical, analytical and reflective thinking. For example, Year 6 pupils were seen developing a spreadsheet to identify differences in running costs, income and profit for a fictional theme park. These skills were then to be applied to the planned school fayre. In addition, opportunities to engage in physical education, dance and creative activities are supported well by after-school clubs.
- Pupils learn about different cultural traditions and faiths, building on the range of cultural and national backgrounds within the school. British values are promoted and celebrated across the school and pupils talk confidently about democracy and the rule of law. As a result, pupils have a keen understanding of respect and tolerance and celebrate individual differences.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Overwhelmingly, they value the quality of education provided and believe that their children thrive in a supportive environment.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors, including the proprietor, have a regular presence in the school and have frequent discussions and updates with the headteacher. As a result they know the day-to-day life of the school well. They are highly committed and ambitious for the school, and are aware of the school's need to improve further.
- Governors evaluate how well the school is improving, supported by regular feedback from school leaders. Where issues are identified, they take swift action. Governors check that planned actions take place in a timely manner. They regularly review the standards that pupils, and groups of pupils, achieve.
- Following the last inspection, governors have overseen the introduction of a range of assessment systems in order to provide more clarity about the progress that pupils make. They use and analyse this information to check the provision for individual pupils. The governors compare how boys and girls are doing, as well as the progress made by individual pupils who have special educational needs and disability.
- The information they receive sometimes lacks clarity about how well some groups of pupils progress from their various starting points with the new curriculum. As a consequence, some aspects of evaluation are limited.
- The proprietor and governors ensure that the school site is well kept and that access points to the site and the school building are secure.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders make sure that systems are checked regularly. The school's safeguarding policy is readily available, and is used with teachers and staff as part of their training. Leaders check that only suitable adults work with pupils and that information is held and recorded properly. Staff are trained to check for signs of abuse.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Senior leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved over time. In key stage 1 and key stage 2, teaching ensures that the vast majority of pupils make at least good and often outstanding progress and achieve high standards.
- Staff successfully establish positive relationships with pupils, built on mutual respect and trust. Pupils seek help when needed and push themselves to do even better. Teachers bring good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and creativity to their lessons. As a result, pupils engage well with their learning, respond enthusiastically to support and advice from staff, and settle quickly to their work.
- In early years and key stage 1, pupils quickly become effective readers. This is because the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is systematic, regular and accurate.
- Pupils use a range of strategies to successfully read and understand unfamiliar texts. Reading books are well matched to their reading. Pupils can talk enthusiastically about authors and genres of books. As a result, they have a joy of reading and books.
- Accurate assessments ensure that teachers have a secure understanding of what pupils can and cannot do. Teachers use their assessments effectively to support their planning and identify the next steps that pupils need to take in their learning. Teachers use this information well to identify those who need additional support, or higher levels of challenge. The picture is less secure for some pupils with special educational needs or disability, where individualised plans sometimes lack the necessary precision to ensure that the next steps are identified and achievable.
- In lessons teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and identify any misconceptions. Mistakes are quickly noticed and pupils are supported well by teachers and classroom assistants in order to secure their learning.
- The effective teaching of handwriting skills, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling ensures that pupils write with confidence and, at times, panache. They often write at length across a range of subjects and take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- In mathematics, the most-able pupils are challenged well to achieve a deeper understanding in using and applying their understanding. The planning meets the needs of all pupils. Sometimes the level of challenge is insufficient to match the consistently rapid progress seen in reading and writing.
- The quality of advice given to pupils reflecting on their learning is well established and effectively supports pupils' understanding of what they need to do next to improve their work. The most able benefit from the additional challenge this brings.
- Homework supports pupils' learning and builds on concepts, ideas and skills taught in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including the use of the internet.
- A strong focus on spiritual, social, moral and cultural development ensures that pupils are confident and have a strong ethos of respect and care. As a result, pupils are well prepared to contribute to the life of the school. They take care of their appearance and the presentation of their work.
- Pupils are aware of, and celebrate, cultural differences and have planned opportunities to put this understanding into practice. For example, a recent visit by a civil rights activist highlighted issues of race and segregation in post-war America.
- Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and positive choices. For example, they can talk confidently about healthy eating, fitness, emotional well-being and why it is important.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors, and those who responded to Parent View, overwhelmingly agree that the school keeps their children safe and that bullying is rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's strong ethos is reflected in the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils. A supportive and peaceful atmosphere permeates classrooms and everyone has a fundamental understanding of the behaviours expected of them.
- Adults, including lunchtime supervisors, say pupils are mainly respectful and polite. In addition, they are considerate of each other. Occasional over-enthusiasm can lead to some pupils forgetting to take turns when wanting to be heard, but they quickly respond when reminded.
- Pupils move around school in an orderly manner. They are ready to start lessons quickly and settle to their work promptly.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. They are secure in their understanding of what hurtful and inappropriate actions they may come across in school, and in life beyond the school. Pupils say that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. When it does occur, it is dealt with promptly.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils have good attitudes to their work and concentrate well. On the occasions where the planned learning is not well-matched to an individual's needs, pupils' concentration is occasionally interrupted by others.
- The school tracks pupils' attendance well. Absences are followed up, particularly if they become regular. This helps keep pupils safe. Attendance is improving and fewer pupils are persistently absent. Leaders work with local agencies well to track where any pupil leaving the school goes next and ensure that they do not go missing from education.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. This is because of consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching, a vibrant and engaging curriculum and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. This leads to them making increasingly rapid progress as they move through the school. By the time that pupils leave the school in Year 6, the vast majority are achieving well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the early years all children make typical progress from their various starting points and attainment in 2015 was high overall and well above the national average. Over three-quarters of the children in the early years achieved a good level of development. However, the progress that children make in early years is less secure because the quality of provision does not ensure enough challenge to push more children to make faster progress from their various starting points.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 is well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils go on to exceed age-related expectations. The progress of pupils accelerates as they move through Key Stage 1, supported by frequently good and sometimes outstanding teaching, especially in Year 2.
- Staff have ensured that pupils read widely and frequently. As a consequence, pupils read with increasing fluency and good levels of understanding as they progress through the school.
- A significantly larger proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved at higher levels than the average in English and mathematics in 2015. This continues a strong pattern of high attainment over several years in Key Stage 2, and this positive picture is replicated in current performance information and pupils' work.
- In Key Stage 2, most pupils make progress across English and mathematics well above average. The vast majority of pupils across all age groups make at least expected progress and the majority make better than expected progress. Their progress in reading is a particular strength.
- The high levels of achievement in key stage 2 ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next stages in their education as they move into secondary school.
- There are currently no pupils with special educational needs or disability with a statement of special educational needs, or who are disadvantaged. Strong provision for pupils with special educational needs ensures that most are making expected progress, and some are making rapid progress and catching up quickly.
- There are no significant differences in the attainment or progress of boys or girls in key stage 1 or key stage 2. The most able make rapid progress across the school in all subject areas. They are supported well through high expectations and challenge.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Leaders in the early years work closely with the headteacher and proprietor to ensure that all the independent school standards relating to early years provision are met.
- The provision meets all the statutory welfare requirements. Child protection policies and procedures are shared, checked and reviewed regularly. Checks are made when staff are appointed and this helps to keep children safe.
- Teaching in the early years requires further improvement. There is some inconsistency in the quality of the planned activities. Children are not always clear about the purpose of the activities provided. In addition, adults do not always take opportunities to extend learning through modelling activities, extending and challenging children's thinking, or by encouraging them to work together and share their ideas.
- Most children enter the early years with skills, language and knowledge that are similar to those seen typically and settle well into established routines. They are happy to come to school and quickly develop confidence, which enables them to play and work alongside other children.
- Most children, including those with special educational needs and disability, make typical progress. As a result, the proportion of children who achieve the early learning goals is improving. By the time they leave the early years, the vast majority of children are ready for the transition into Key Stage 1.
- The proportion of children making quicker progress than that seen typically is not as high as it should be, especially for the most able. This is because adults in the early years sometimes miss opportunities to maximise learning.
- The teaching of phonics is delivered in a structured and systematic way. This helps children to quickly develop their reading skills in different activities. Opportunities to apply writing skills across a range of other activities are more limited.
- Staff use assessments to help plan activities and children's next steps in their learning. The assessment system, linked to learning logs of children's achievements, is a fairly recent introduction. At present parents do not contribute to achievement notes about their children in the learning logs.
- The provision for two-year-olds has a clear focus on the care the children receive and is used to promote learning. Key workers keep detailed records of important events and observations. Children play alongside older children in the nursery and are given opportunities to join in socially. Staff are aware of the developmental needs and differences between children and respond accordingly.
- Children generally behave well and play alongside each other contentedly. Where learning activities are focused, children engage well, but where learning is less purposeful, children tend to lose interest and focus. Opportunities to work collaboratively, solve problems together and learn from each other are limited.
- The early years leader has developed collaborative working arrangements well between staff and this has helped to secure a consistent approach to the new assessment system. Assessments are not always checked for accuracy and limited use is made of information to inform school improvement priorities.
- The early years leader has worked hard to introduce the provision for two-year-olds and works closely with other providers to ensure that transitions for children into the school are smooth.

School details

Unique reference number	118125
Inspection number	10012979
DfE registration number	812 6001

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Proprietor	Alpha Schools
Chair Of Governors	Mr Ali Khan
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Thompson
Annual fees (day pupils)	Early Years/Reception: £1740 a term Y1 and Y2: £1800 a term Y3 and Y4: £1960 a term Y5 and Y6: £2140 a term
Telephone number	01472 878907
Website	www.stmartinsprep.co.uk
Email address	headmaster@stmartinsprep.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	May 2013

Information about this school

- St Martin's is a small, non-selective independent day school for boys and girls aged two to 11 years.
- There are currently 145 pupils on roll, including in the Kindergarten.
- The school offers care before, and after, school. The vast majority of pupils come from the local town and surrounding areas.
- The school is located in a large former private home, with large grounds that offer ample opportunities for physical education and outdoor learning.
- The early years provision is in a separate building on the same site as the main building.
- The school was last inspected in May 2013.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provisions for its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held discussions with governors (including the proprietor) and the headteacher to check that the independent school standards are being met.
- Discussions were also held with other school leaders and staff to establish how well the school was operating, meeting the needs of all pupils and ensuring that safeguarding is secure.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classrooms and watched how well pupils behave and learn.
- Joint observations were held with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, held meetings with pupils and listened to some read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions around the school, in lessons and at playtimes.
- Inspectors met with some parents at the start of the school day and scrutinised the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents.
- The inspection team examined a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, information on the performance of teachers and pupils, information shared with the governing body, information on safeguarding and other key policies.

Inspection team

Jonathan Brown, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joanne Sharpe

Her Majesty's Inspector

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