

St Mary's Independent School

57 Midanbury Lane, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 4DJ

Inspection dates

11 September 2018

Overall outcome

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 11, 12

- The previous inspection found that some important policies had not been drawn up or fully implemented at the school. These included important aspects relating to health and safety and to fire safety. As a result, systems to ensure the personal development and welfare of pupils were not rigorous enough.
- Leaders have implemented an effective health and safety policy that is sufficiently detailed and thought through and is specific to St Mary's. It reflects the high priority that leaders now place on this important aspect of independent school leadership. As a result, the school is now a much safer place than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Importantly, leaders have successfully implemented a range of strategies to minimise risks both to pupils and staff. Since the previous inspection, leaders have also commissioned health and safety and fire-risk assessments by external professionals to improve the safety of the school premises. They have acted swiftly to address issues raised as concerns by these assessments and have reduced significantly the potential for accidents at St Mary's.
- Leaders demonstrate a much more rigorous approach to managing health and safety, including fire-risk assessment. Leaders, including governors, regularly carry out safety walks to identify potential dangers to staff and pupils. These checks are recorded appropriately and any subsequent maintenance needs are carried out quickly.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders have successfully addressed the concerns raised about locked fire exits and untested electrical equipment. For instance, they have sought external professional advice and acted accordingly to improve fire-escape routes. Fire drills are carried out regularly to ensure that leaders can evacuate the buildings quickly and safely.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 25

- At the time of the previous inspection, the suitability of accommodation for pupils' first-aid and medical needs was not good enough. For instance, there was not adequate access to a sink and water for washing purposes. As a result, any pupil who was injured or unwell could not be cared for to a high enough standard.
- Leaders have quickly ensured that the school's medical rooms are fit for purpose. Both rooms provide the required amenities to enable staff to look after pupils well. Importantly, the rooms provide a quiet and comforting environment for pupils to recuperate and rest in if they are hurt or feeling unwell.
- The newly appointed 'health and well-being' lead provides additional care for pupils. For instance, she is at hand to provide paediatric first-aid care during breaktimes and to staff the medical room when children are sick or injured. The enhanced level of care now provided enhances the welfare provision available for pupils.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii)

- At the time of the previous inspection, there were insufficient systems to manage effectively any complaints raised by parents and carers of pupils. Records of parental concerns were not kept, and procedures for following up any complaints were unclear. Consequently, complaints were not dealt with effectively enough.
- Leaders have written and successfully implemented a new procedure for managing parents' complaints. They take seriously any concerns raised and work diligently to investigate thoroughly issues raised by parents. Leaders demonstrate a positive attitude to tackling concerns and to resolving amicably and professionally any complaints parents might make.
- A new system for recording and monitoring complaints enables leaders to better manage any parental concerns. Leaders are fastidious in ensuring that all information regarding individual complaints is retained and catalogued accurately. They are also careful to detail any actions taken to resolve complaints and to record resolutions and outcomes of any complaint investigations. Systems to manage complaints are now much stronger than at the time of the previous inspection.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, governance did not demonstrate good capacity to hold school leaders to account. This was because governors too readily took at face value what leaders told them. Governors did not check whether the information that

school leaders provided them with was accurate. Consequently, governance did not hold school leaders to account strongly enough.

- Despite their obvious disappointment, leaders have tackled determinedly those independent school standards that were unmet. The executive headteacher continues to provide strong and focused leadership to drive continued improvements. Her accurate self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness informs clearly the ongoing actions for improvement that are implemented well by all. She is a driving force of improvement at St Mary's and ensures that leaders are implementing carefully the school action plan.
- Wisely, governors have sought additional external support to help develop their ability to secure accountability. They have undertaken recent training that enables them to challenge leaders better, to hold individuals to account and to evaluate the school's effectiveness as a whole. Governors have also undertaken an audit of their skills, and identified successfully the attributes they are seeking in new governors. Governors' recent work demonstrates their keenness to improve and their better understanding of what strong governance looks like.
- The last standard inspection found that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils' outcomes were good. However, inspectors identified how these aspects could be improved further. In addressing inspectors' findings, mathematics teaching at St Mary's has been strengthened to ensure that learning is suitably challenging for all pupils. Simultaneously, leaders have adapted the mathematics curriculum well and purchased additional resources to provide better support for good teaching. Although still developing, these changes are having a positive impact on pupils' achievements.
- Similarly, leaders are taking effective action to improve systems to identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is supported well and has taken appropriate action to improve provision for this group of pupils. Importantly, this has included reviewing which pupils are in need of additional support and targeting more effectively the extra help these pupils require. The SENCo is leading ongoing improvements at St Mary's with clear determination.
- All the standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards have been met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- The proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(b) (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils, and for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which provides information for the complaints panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher; which provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and which records action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) (paragraphs 33, 33(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

School details

Unique reference number	116567
DfE registration number	852/6003
Inspection number	10068080

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	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Brothers of Christian Instruction
Chair	Reverend Brother Francis
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Charlemagne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,850–£10,200
Telephone number	02380 671 267
Website	www.stmarysindependentschool.co.uk/
Email address	admin@stmiss.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	13–15 March 2018

Information about this school

- St Mary's Independent School is an independent co-educational Roman Catholic school for pupils aged from three to 16 years. It is a Christian school whose mission statement is embodied in the lives and works of the De la Mennais Brothers, whose aim is 'to make Jesus better known and loved'.
- The school was founded in 1922 as a boys' school. In 1992, the school started admitting girls. The school is registered for 312 pupils.
- The school was first registered for education in 1947.
- The school is non-selective. It aims to nurture, inspire and support pupils to achieve.

- There is one pupil with an education, health and care plan at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was conducted without notice.
- The Department for Education accepted the school's action plan with modifications on 9 August 2018.
- The inspector had discussions with the headteacher and with two representatives of the governing body. He scrutinised the single central register and other documentation relating to previously unmet standards. Together with the headteacher, a walk of the school buildings and site was conducted to review actions to meet previously unmet health and safety issues.

Inspection team

Dom Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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