

St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100641
Local Authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	285836
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Lauren Ovenden HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	846
6th form	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev S Gates MA BA
Headteacher	Ms L Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2002
School address	155 Tulse Hill London SW2 3UP
Telephone number	020 8674 5594
Fax number	020 8674 1379

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools.

Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average school which serves an area of high social and economic deprivation. A high proportion of students are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being of Caribbean and African heritages. Many students speak English as an additional language, although few are at an early stage. A high proportion of students have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school is a specialist technology college and recently acquired two additional specialisms in sports and raising achievement through learning. There is a relatively new sixth form that operates in collaboration with two partner schools. The sixth form admits male students.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The chair of governors describes this school as one where 'every child is valued to come to her or his full potential'. This accurately describes the shared mission of school leaders and all staff, contributing to the very strong, caring environment that makes this excellent school popular with parents and students. The guidance and support provided to students is outstanding because this is a school where every child is known.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have excellent opportunities to develop spiritually through the very inclusive Christian ethos that permeates the school. Students of different faiths are welcomed, and as one told the inspector, 'We recognise that many religions have common values and that unites us'. Students' cultural awareness and sense of community are particular strengths. There are high levels of enjoyment of school, demonstrated by students' active participation in a wide range of different activities, many of which are related to the technology specialism, such as the London Engineering Project. All students, including those in the sixth form, are actively encouraged to develop healthy habits through physical activity and the comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE).

Overall, students make excellent progress and achieve above average standards in GCSE examinations because they are taught well by knowledgeable teachers. Lessons are characterised by high expectations and a well-established climate for learning. Students contribute significantly to this learning culture because they arrive at lessons motivated to learn. In the best lessons, they are given plenty of opportunity to explore concepts and strategies through varied tasks that focus on what students have learnt, however, this is not consistent. Students make outstanding progress in English and, in 2006, Year 11 achievement was excellent. The rate of progress in Year 9 was less strong because some students did not make as good progress in mathematics and science. The school has put in place robust strategies to drive forward improvement and school monitoring data indicates that the rate of progress has significantly improved for this Year 9 cohort. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make outstanding progress because of a well-tailored curriculum, coupled with excellent support and guidance about how they can improve.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Very high expectations are communicated very effectively by the excellent headteacher and her strong senior leadership team. The work of the school is monitored carefully and contributes to accurate school self-evaluation. Areas of relative underperformance are robustly challenged and improved by managers at all levels. A real strength is the active governing body that provide energy and challenge to support the work of the school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving sixth form. Since its establishment three years ago, the school has carefully refined the curriculum to ensure that it is now well matched to student needs. It offers a good balance of vocational and academic courses at level 2 and 3. Approximately 40% of students are new to the school on entry to the sixth form. Overall, students have achieved lower than average standards in their GCSEs. Students' achievement is satisfactory and they reach average standards. The school's tracking data indicate that

students are making better progress this year, and in particular, students have made good progress on vocational courses. Although some sixth form teaching is good and recent school monitoring indicates that it is improving, overall teaching and learning are satisfactory because teaching strategies are not always closely matched to the diverse learning needs of students. The quality of care, guidance and support for students is outstanding. For example, a 'Gentlemen's Club' has been established to ensure that the needs of the male students are met. Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school has prioritised the development of the sixth form and established effective collaboration with its partner schools. The sixth form is well managed and there is good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the sixth form by improving the quality of teaching and learning to that of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average. They achieve exceptionally well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. Standards in technology subjects have improved significantly since the last inspection. Students in 2006 made outstanding progress in their GCSE examinations because they had achieved so well in Years 7-9 and they continued to make good progress in Years 10-11. School monitoring indicates that current Year 11 overall have made similar rates of progress and are on track to achieve high standards. In 2006, Year 9 students made good progress in English and average progress in mathematics and science. The school quickly identified priorities for improvement, and as a consequence, school-based data indicate that students have made much better progress this year. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make exceptional progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding because care, guidance and support are outstanding and excellent opportunities within the curriculum develop their sense of citizenship and moral values. During one assembly, students were asked to reflect on the global issue of modern-day slavery as part of their wider work with schools in Jamaica and Ghana commemorating the abolition of slavery. Students' social development is excellent and their well-being is enhanced by the safe environment of the school. The new sports specialism is supporting students' awareness of healthy living as more are becoming involved in competitive sport and an increasing number are representing the school and the borough. The Christian value of charity is evident in students' fundraising and they have good opportunities to contribute to their school and the wider community, as members of the choirs and as ambassadors for the school. Effective guidance about their next steps, coupled with the progress they make in developing literacy and numeracy skills helps to prepare them exceptionally well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good. There are some outstanding features, such as the strong relationships between students and with their teachers. Students arrive at lessons motivated to learn and they respond well to teachers' high expectations. Students know their targets and value feedback which gives them clear guidance about how they can improve their work. These features, coupled with a responsive curriculum enable them to achieve very well. In the most effective lessons, planning focuses on how students learn and so teaching enables them to discuss their learning, enhancing their understanding. However, this is not fully developed in all lessons and in those lessons students make good rather than outstanding progress. In one mathematics lesson, students modelled their strategies for solving a problem and the class then discussed the effectiveness of each approach. The end of the lesson clearly focused all students on what they had learnt in that lesson, reviewing and consolidating their understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is outstanding because it is carefully tailored to meet the needs of students, is responsive to their interests and regularly reviewed to assess its effectiveness. The technology specialism has led to a widening of courses offered and improved vocational provision. More able students can take some examinations early and have the opportunity to broaden their studies, such as taking an extra language course. There is a wide range of additional activities so students can participate in those which most match their personal interests and needs. One parent commented, 'There are a variety of activities that expose the girls to new challenges. My daughter in Year 7 is excited with her weekly engineering workshops held after school. She now dreams of being a structural engineer!'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

One parent wrote, 'I am extremely grateful for all the encouragement, care and support my daughter gets.' Care, guidance and support are outstanding. There are very strong systems to monitor students' progress and regular evaluation ensures that support is timely. Vulnerable students are monitored closely and the school works hard to liaise with external agencies to promote all students' well-being. The school has led the development of a parent steering group which is exploring strategies to support students in the light of recent violent incidents in the local community. Parents told inspectors that they valued the way the school worked with them, however a small minority felt that the school should take greater account of students' views. Learning mentors and other internal support staff are highly valued by students. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is closely matched to the needs of all learners, such as the nurture group.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are outstanding because of their impact on students' achievement and personal development which are central to the work of the school. One parent wrote, 'The school has a strong and united leadership that is consistent in their expectations of the children'. Leaders and managers at all levels are well focused on ensuring that students achieve their potential. There are excellent monitoring processes which coupled with regular meetings provide timely information to support achievement. Strategies to tackle areas of relative underperformance are implemented with vigour. For example, the school has adapted provision to raise achievement in dance and the new head of science has successfully implemented a range of strategies to improve performance that has had a significant impact on progress this year.

The governing body is active and very supportive of the school. They are well-informed about students' progress, enabling them to effectively hold the school to account. The school demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve, demonstrated by the rise in standards since the last inspection.

One parent informed the inspector, 'I will always recommend St. Martin's to anyone.'

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls, London, SW2 3UP

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed talking to you in lessons, group discussions and on the corridors. Your contributions to assembly were excellent; the singing was a lovely way to start the day and you support each other well by the way you respond to those who contribute.

This is an outstanding school because your teachers show exceptional care for you and have very high expectations. They monitor your performance carefully and give very clear guidance about how to improve. You told me that you enjoy lessons because you are well taught and that you have very strong relationships with your teachers. You particularly value lessons where there is the opportunity to talk about your learning, share and explore ideas. It was pleasing to hear you talk about how St Martin's is a community and that you value and recognise diversity. The school is very well led and managed, and this is demonstrated in the way the courses offered are often adapted and developed to meet your needs, such as the excellent range of extra-curricular activities that you can take part in and additional courses for the most able.

You make a significant contribution to making this school so good. You attend regularly and participate well in lessons and other activities which enable you to develop into thoughtful individuals with a good awareness of how you can contribute to society.

The new sixth form is satisfactory and improving. School leaders and managers are working hard to make it even better, and will be focusing on raising standards in your examinations by improving the quality of teaching and learning to match that in the main school.

Best wishes for the future,

Lauren Ovenden HMI