

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Martins School

The Derwent Campus, Bracknell Drive, Alvaston, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 0BT

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

St Martins School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Sabrina Hobbs. This school is part of The Shaw Education Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jo Heard-Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school continues to provide an exceptional quality of education and care for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is a strong, united ambition for pupils and students of all ages to achieve their highest potential.

Pupils fulfil the school's high expectations. They thrive and are happy due to the school's excellent all-round provision. Parents and carers typically say that they are proud to send their children to the school. Pupils were eager to share the difference that the school has made to their lives. Some, who had negative prior experiences of education, spoke in terms of being a 'different person' now. Pupils highly value the support they receive, both for their learning and for their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Pupils show empathy and respect for others. They understand that, sometimes, a person may struggle to control their emotions. When that happens, pupils have confidence that staff will act quickly and calmly to keep everyone safe.

Pupils benefit from a vast array of opportunities to develop their personal skills. For example, the 'Heart of the Park' community-based café, run by a team of staff and pupils, helps pupils to learn invaluable workplace and social skills.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum has been extremely well planned and developed over time. On admission, pupils are carefully placed in one of three curriculum pathways, according to their needs. Careful consideration is given to the objectives stated in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The pathways open up a wide range of possibilities that lead to recognised accreditations and qualifications, including up to A Level and university entry. Students in the school's 'Horizons' sixth-form provision can access courses that closely match their interests and abilities. This includes courses that enhance independence and essential life skills. There are strong links with the local college, as well as with city-based employers. Supported internships are available, for example at the Royal Derby Hospital. The school is relentlessly focused on preparing pupils for adulthood. This begins as soon as pupils join the school in Year 7. Employers typically give very positive feedback about the students on placement. The proportion of St Martins pupils who successfully proceed to employment, education or training far exceeds local and national figures for pupils with SEND.

The school adopts a firm focus on reading and mathematics. Daily lessons in these core subjects enable pupils to develop secure knowledge and skills at the right level for their needs. For example, pupils of any age who are in the early stages of reading receive expert teaching, including the systematic teaching of phonics. Teachers have strong subject knowledge across the curriculum. They demonstrate a precise understanding of their pupils. Staff present subject matter clearly. They step in quickly to address any misunderstandings. As a result of adults' high expectations and clear routines, the atmosphere in lessons is calm and purposeful. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are proud of their achievements and keen to share their learning. The standard of work in pupils' books is high.

Highly positive relationships are at the heart of the school's provision. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' individual and complex needs and circumstances. They encourage and model positive behaviour, in line with the school's motto: 'We Learn, We Respect, We're Family'. The school has a high expectation for pupils' attendance. Overall absence is typically low. The school's family support team works proactively with the small proportion of pupils who do not attend school regularly. Decisions around matters such as the use of temporary part-time timetables or alternative provision are taken in the best interests of pupils. The school uses suspensions appropriately and they are decreasing.

The school supports pupils' broader personal development, and their well-being, exceptionally well. This includes an appropriate emphasis on how to stay safe, and the importance of healthy relationships. There is a strong focus on preparing pupils as well-informed young citizens. Important values such as respect are included as part of the assembly and events programmes. The curriculum has been carefully designed and adapted to cover themes such as 'humanities and global citizenship' and 'culture and diversity'. Pupils are very well placed to identify with concepts of equality and difference.

They demonstrate a mature understanding and a high degree of self-awareness when discussing such matters.

Leadership at all levels is very strong. This includes the excellent support and challenge provided by governors and the multi-academy trust. Staff are wholeheartedly positive about the support and training that they receive to fulfil their roles. Staff also praise leaders' approachability and the care shown for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school's predecessor was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school of the same name to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in June 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147143
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10347686
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	49
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Andrew Meehan
CEO of the trust	Jo Heard-Jones
Executive headteacher	Sabrina Hobbs
Website	www.stmartinsschoolderby.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Martins is a secondary special school for pupils with a range of additional needs, predominantly autism and/or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- St Martins School converted to become an academy in May 2020. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness.
- The executive headteacher took up the post in September 2021.
- All pupils who attend the school are supported by an EHC plan.
- Post-16 students attend the school's off-site 'Horizons' sixth-form provision, located at Irongate House, 10 Irongate, Derby DE1 3FJ.

- There is an additional off-site provision situated at the Royal Derby Hospital from which post-16 students undertake supported internships.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school runs an off-site 'Heart of the Park' community café situated within the Derby city Arboretum Park.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and other senior and curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with several members of the local governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector held discussions with representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils and post-16 students about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors visited the school's off-site 'Horizons' sixth-form provision and the off-site 'Heart of the Park' community café.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christine Horrocks

Ofsted Inspector

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