

Inspection of St Martin's School Brentwood

Hanging Hill Lane, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2HG

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Jamie Foster. This school is part of Discovery Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Ryan Duff, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Witty.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very positive about their school. They talk confidently about their great experiences at St Martin's. The culture is very supportive. Pupils respect each other and display high levels of kindness towards others. Across all years, including sixth form, pupils are incredibly well mannered and polite. Both during and outside of lessons, it is common practice to greet and talk to adults in a friendly manner. This contributes to the warm ethos that is felt around the school.

Pupils learn in a friendly and calm environment. Disruption to learning is extremely uncommon. Pupils value the excellent behaviour displayed by others both in lessons and during social time. Older pupils talk about how much better the school has become in recent years following a purposeful drive from leaders to increase standards.

The school's ethos 'to be the best you can be' is well established. From Year 7 through to sixth form, pupils know that they will be challenged and supported to be successful. They appreciate that their teachers push them to achieve well. They really enjoy the range of class activities such as quizzes and practical learning. Pupils want to achieve highly and value the support that teachers give them that enables them to do so.

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

In recent years, there have been considerable changes to the leadership of the school. This has brought about significant improvements to the school's culture and pupils' behaviour.

The curriculum is very well considered and ambitious. The school has carefully planned the learning so that pupils do well across all key stages, including sixth form. Leaders have a precise awareness of what is working well and what could be even better. Teachers receive targeted professional development that closely aligns with the needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are confident in using a range of strategies, such as regular questioning, to make sure that pupils learn what is being taught.

In the main, teachers are very skilled in planning lessons that support all pupils, including those in sixth form, to achieve well. They focus carefully on how well disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, are doing. They take appropriate action where needed to make sure that pupils do not fall behind their peers. Teachers are skilled at making sure pupils keep up with the challenge of the curriculum. However, there is sometimes inconsistency in how effectively teachers plan activities that support all pupils to excel. On occasion, some pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to meet the intended ambition of the curriculum.

The school has a programme in place to support pupils to develop the skills they need to be confident readers. Many pupils enjoy reading and benefit from a well-resourced library. Specific teaching of key vocabulary in lessons ensures pupils can access the texts with

confidence. However, the weakest readers do not always receive sufficiently timely support to develop the skills they need to quickly become fluent readers.

The behaviour of pupils across the school is consistently impressive. This is because there is a shared understanding of the school's high expectations. Younger pupils have settled into school extremely well. They are engaged and passionate about their learning, proudly talking about the products they have made in design lessons or talking confidently about their new skills in French or German. Routines are well established which means learning time is not wasted. Sixth-form students play a key role in school life. Many volunteer to support younger pupils in a range of activities. Pupils feel very safe in school.

The school's personal development programme is well thought out and organised. Staff ensure the information pupils receive is age-appropriate and highly relevant to their context. Pupils are positive about how these themes are taught in their lessons and assemblies. They have a good understanding of important themes such as how to stay safe and sexual harassment. They display high levels of respect for other races and religions. There is a high-quality careers programme in place. Pupils are well informed about work and study options open to them. They are very positive about the impact of the guidance they receive which allows them to make important decisions about their future.

School leaders, including trust personnel, display an excellent knowledge of the school. The new leadership team took robust and effective action to bring about rapid improvements which have impacted all pupils positively. Staff are very happy and speak positively about the leadership of the school. Parents are equally positive about their children's experiences at St Martin's.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers do not plan activities that are closely matched to pupils' various starting points. Some pupils are not consistently given the opportunity to deepen or extend their learning. Leaders must ensure that all teachers give all pupils appropriate opportunities to meet the intended ambition of the curriculum.
- Pupils who struggle to read with confidence do not consistently receive the most appropriate support to help them catch up. Interventions are not always timely or matched closely enough to pupils' needs. The school needs to ensure that the weakest readers are given the support they need to quickly become fluent readers.

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	136875
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10347310
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,727
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	303
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Witty
CEO of the trust	Ryan Duff
Headteacher	Jamie Foster
Website	www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the trust has appointed a new CEO, a new executive headteacher and two new deputy headteachers.
- 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 uses two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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 trust staff, including the CEO of the trust and trust directors of education. They also met with the executive headteacher, two deputy headteachers and senior staff, including those with responsibility for pupils with SEND and responsibility for the sixth form.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and the chair of the local school committee.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to school improvement and governance, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, the personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils with SEND and the school's reading strategy. They also held meetings with staff with responsibilities in these areas.
- Inspectors reviewed Ofsted's staff survey, parent survey and pupil survey. They also spoke to groups of pupils, including single-sex groups.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, English, modern foreign languages, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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

Bessie Owen, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector
Polly Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Fowler	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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