



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**St Mary's School**

**November 2022**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	St Mary's School			
<b>DfE number</b>	202/6084			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	2643515			
<b>Address</b>	St Mary's School 47 Fitzjohn's Avenue Hampstead London NW3 6PG			
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7435 1868			
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@stmh.co.uk			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Harriet Connor-Earl			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Carroll Barry-Walsh			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	205			
	<b>EYFS</b>	43	<b>Juniors</b>	162
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 November to 1 December 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 St Mary's School was founded by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a Catholic day school. In 1991, the school became a registered charity with a board of trustees and a governing body. The trustees are responsible for the overall strategy of the school and financial matters. The governors are responsible for the educational direction, policy and priorities, within the budgets and objectives established by the trustees. Since the previous inspection the school has a new chair of governors and has ceased to admit male pupils.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide an education firmly founded on the Catholic faith, nurturing spiritual and moral principles. It sets out to create a caring environment, recognising the dignity and worth of each child. It aspires to foster high standards and intellectual development, with the pursuit of academic excellence. The school seeks to value the unique contribution of every child and encourage an active partnership between home, school and the community.

### About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come predominantly from professional families, whose varied ethnic backgrounds reflect those of the local area. Data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 22 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 18 receive specialist support. Five pupils have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 60 pupils; none of whom receive support for this aspect of their learning. The school provides support for pupils identified as being more able, or talented in a particular area, by adjusting its curriculum and providing additional activities.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Explorers	Nursery

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils are excellent communicators, who willingly present ideas and information to others and are attentive listeners from a very young age.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning, in particular, their enthusiasm and willingness to engage in their learning.
- Pupils at all ages have excellent numeracy skills and apply these seamlessly to other subject areas.
- Pupils demonstrate extremely high collaborative skills.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of self-understanding and self-confidence.
- Pupils strongly value diversity and are passionate that everyone should be treated fairly, irrespective of culture or background.
- Pupils demonstrate notably high levels of spiritual awareness for their age and a deep appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils respect and cultural understanding are very well developed for their age and stage of development.

#### Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that the development of pupils' higher-order thinking skills, in particular the ability to synthesise information at an appropriate level for their age, is consistent across all areas of learning.
- Enable pupils to contribute further to the lives of others through the improvement of opportunities to make a contribution to the local community.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The school's assessment data, supported by evidence from pupils' work and achievements in lessons, demonstrates high levels of attainment, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils, and all who teach them, have a clear picture of their learning profile because of an effective system of recording and monitoring progress. Pupils with SEND and EAL make similar progress as others in their class as they are well supported and encouraged to be as independent as possible. In the EYFS a very large majority of children attain the expected levels of attainment by the time they leave the setting. In responding to the questionnaires most parents said that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress. In this respect the school successfully meets its aim to aspire to foster high standards and intellectual development, with the pursuit of academic excellence.
- 3.6 Pupils acquire excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. This is because the curriculum is well-planned and challenging, with an emphasis on meeting pupils' individual needs. Those with SEND benefit from the knowledgeable and sensitive support provided by the school. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents stated that their child's particular individual educational needs are met effectively. The youngest pupils in a literacy lesson demonstrated a strong knowledge of language as they were confident in sounding out and using digraphs effectively to improve their writing. In a physical education lesson, Year 2 pupils displayed excellent progress in developing their physical skills to control and pass a ball with either foot. Year 6 pupils in a French lesson adeptly applied their linguistic knowledge and understanding to accurately identify and use the correct verbs when discussing sports and hobbies. As a result of careful questioning by teachers and the school's approach to thematic learning, pupils develop the ability to use their knowledge, understanding and skills holistically. For example, in a creative curriculum lesson, Year 3 pupils applied their strong scientific knowledge and understanding of energy to identify practical solutions to reduce energy consumption. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaires agreed that their teachers are supportive, and their knowledge and skills improve in lessons.
- 3.7 Pupils display excellent communication skills, having been encouraged to share their opinions and ideas from the earliest years. The youngest children in the EYFS are highly articulate and thoughtful speakers, such as when describing and accurately identifying the shapes they used in their construction of a castle. Younger pupils were observed displaying high level performance skills and speaking with great expression while practicing for their nativity performance. In a Year 3 French lesson pupils spoke enthusiastically and skilfully when describing Christmas jumpers. As pupils progress through the school, they develop strong reading skills: for example, in a Year 6 English lesson where pupils showed a deep level of inference when discussing the class novel. Pupils' excellent listening skills enable them to share their ideas successfully; they rarely interrupt each other and respond accurately to the points made by others. Pupils write fluently and coherently in English and other subjects and match their writing styles to different situations. For example, Year 4 written work demonstrates pupils' ability to adeptly apply a variety of linguistic techniques when writing a newspaper report about their class reader. In a Year 1 English lesson pupils applied their strong understanding of language to use noun phrases highly effectively to elevate their writing about gnomes.
- 3.8 Pupils make excellent progress in numeracy and achieve at high levels in relation to age expectations. They apply their mathematical understanding and skills with great success, as when Reception children demonstrated a strong understanding of number as they accurately and quickly subitised numbers up to 10. Year 2 pupils displayed a notably strong understanding for their age of the commutative law and arrays to successfully solve word problems. Year 6 pupils adeptly applied BIDMAS to accurately and confidently solve complex mathematical problems. Pupils apply their mathematics seamlessly to other subjects. For example, younger pupils applied their good numeracy skills when reading meters and accurately calculating different wind speeds. Year 5 pupils enthusiastically described how they measured how far planets were in relation to each other. Pupils'

willingness to attempt a task without fear of being wrong is strongly supported by teaching which encourages pupils to challenge themselves.

- 3.9 Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are highly developed. The use of technology is embedded within the curriculum so that pupils apply it effectively in a variety of ways appropriate to the needs of the task, whether recording results, events or undertaking research. During discussions pupils spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the many ways they use ICT in lessons including coding, research and using commercial programmes. Children in Reception were observed using tablets highly competently to develop their vocabulary. Year 2 written work showed how pupils used tablets effectively to sort living and non-living things. In a Year 6 English lesson pupils were using their laptops independently and highly effectively to aid their writing, some pupils using them to comb for adventurous vocabulary and others re-reading parts of the story to reflect more on inference and nuance.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate strong study skills and are given a variety of opportunities for developing their skills. The youngest children actively chose their learning activities, remaining fully engaged throughout with little intervention from staff. Work in the Year 4 creative curriculum books demonstrates pupils' excellent hypothesising skills when considering artefacts and the impact acid may have had on different materials found in an Anglo-Saxon burial site. In a Year 1 personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education (PSHCEE) lesson pupils effectively analysed what makes a healthy relationship. Older pupils in an art lesson drew upon their experience of a recent trip to highly effectively create tone and texture with charcoal. These strong study skills are due to the school's focus on developing their independence in learning, although on occasion work is too closely directed and prescriptive. This restricts pupils' ability to consistently develop their higher-order thinking skills, particularly synthesizing information. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaires agreed that the school equips their children with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.11 In response to the school's encouragement to follow their interests and pursue their talents, pupils regularly achieve high levels of success in a wide range of non-academic activities and are successful in many sports and creative arts. Pupils are successful at gaining places and scholarships to a wide range of senior schools with demanding entry requirements. Sports teams such as in football and gymnastics are regularly successful in local, regional and national tournaments. Pupils regularly perform strongly in national mathematical and writing competitions. In art, some of the pupils' work has been chosen for display in the Royal Academy's summer shows. A significant proportion of pupils in the school learn a musical instrument, many achieving high levels of success in grade examinations. These successes are a result of the support they receive from staff and the excellent range of opportunities open to them. They are further encouraged by positive praise and the celebration of all successes through a variety of different avenues, such as house points, golden tickets and the marble jar. In questionnaire responses, almost all parents say the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 Pupils including children in the EYFS have notably strong attitudes to learning. They are focused and have a strong desire to succeed. In lessons, pupils apply themselves with diligence and keenly embrace independent and collaborative learning. Children in the EYFS use their initiative to choose their own activities and resources independently on arriving at school and display great enthusiasm playing collaboratively together during free time. In a Year 4 English lesson pupils independently accessed dictionaries to find synonyms to improve their word choices for their free verse writing and challenged themselves to write similes. Pupils in a Year 6 French lesson displayed excellent attitudes towards their learning, asking thoughtful and challenging questions which enable them to develop a greater understanding and knowledge of the subject. Pupils' highly positive attitudes are facilitated by teaching which provides a broad and challenging curriculum alongside a culture of open-ended questioning. Consequently, the school is highly successful in meeting its aim to value the unique contribution of every child within the school community. This results from the strong commitment

and oversight that the leadership provides. In their questionnaire responses almost all parents stated that the school was well led and governed.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline and resilience. The children in EYFS show from their behaviour that they feel settled and secure. Scrutiny of pupils' work reveals a pride in their presentation and a desire to succeed. They have a clear understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance based on regular feedback from teachers and from effective self-reflection. For example, in a Year 5 music lesson pupils displayed excellent self-awareness as they reflected astutely upon their individual and group performances in a concert, identifying positive and constructive actions and techniques that will enable them to improve future performance. Pupils display a strong understanding of the importance of the 'St Mary's Way' that sets out clear expectations such as 'do your best to be your best' and 'be kind and helpful'. In the questionnaires most parents agree that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils are effective and confident decision makers from an early age. Children in the EYFS choose which activities to engage in, and they are encouraged to pursue their own interests in the classroom. In a Year 3 English lesson pupils displayed strong collective decision-making skills when deciding how their group were going to represent a raging storm through drama. During discussions pupils understand that decisions they make have a direct bearing on their own success and wellbeing. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson pupils considered the level of extension challenge, explaining that, while it may be tempting to attempt the easier challenges, it will limit their progress so they opt for higher levels. In discussions, they spoke enthusiastically about being able to choose which positions of responsibility to express interest in, and appreciated they may not always be successful.
- 3.16 As they progress through the school pupils develop excellent spiritual awareness underpinned by the school's core Christian ethos. They are supported in their spiritual development by a strong curriculum and regular Chapel services and collective worship. All pupils can lead prayers, which many stated deepens their understanding and awareness in this area. Pupils develop a good understanding of world religions with many of the main festivals recognised and celebrated with those of other faiths. Pupils have a strong awareness of the non-material aspects of life, citing to inspectors the importance of qualities such as kindness and sharing. Pupils say they enjoy singing and listening to the music in the chapel as it fills them with joy, whilst others shared how having a quiet time in the library just to think or read was very special. In Year 2 religious education books, pupils ask thoughtful questions such as 'Why do the clouds move so slowly?' demonstrating a critical appreciation of the beauty of the natural world.
- 3.17 Across the school, pupils are kind, courteous and extremely well behaved. They show a keen sense of wanting to do the right thing; they have pride in their good behaviour and respect one another, taking responsibility for their part in maintaining a friendly and safe space to learn. In an EYFS assembly children displayed an excellent understanding of kindness and how this can impact on themselves and others. Scrutiny of Year 2 PSHCEE work demonstrated pupils have a notably strong understanding of children's rights and responsibilities and the need for rules, rewards and sanctions in their daily lives. Year 4 creative curriculum books demonstrated their excellent reasoning skills when considering moral questions such as, 'Should the country return the Rosetta Stone?'. Older pupils keenly embrace responsibility, such as Year 6 monitors who told inspectors how much they enjoy being able to go and spend time with younger pupils in class either reading to them or just being their friend or helping with their PE lesson. In response to the questionnaires all parents agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour.
- 3.18 Pupils have highly developed social awareness. They embrace the school's culture of being pastorally kind and respond when a peer needs help. Pupils of all ages interact well with their peers and adults

alike and readily engage in conversation. Collaboration is a notably strong feature of the school and evident in all aspects of school life. This is because a particular focus is placed on the development of collaboration as a skill and as such is evident in almost all lessons and clearly articulated by pupils and teachers. From the youngest age, pupils display excellent collaborative skills, such as, at breaktime children happily share the space and equipment in a mature manner for their age. Pupils value the opportunities to work together across different age groups. For example, during discussions pupils told inspectors how in an interhouse STEAM day they worked very effectively with others of different ages to create new games from the existing playground equipment for the headmistress to enjoy.

- 3.19 Pupils develop strong leadership skills and contribute positively to the school community through performing a wide range of leadership roles, seeking the election from their peers for all positions of responsibility. In discussion they articulated their understanding that each position comes with responsibility to look after others and set an example. They understand the roles need to be undertaken seriously and fulfilled effectively. Pupils actively participate in school improvement through the school council or as representatives on the food committee. These committees offer all pupils a forum to express their views and ideas and understand they can influence positive developments in school life. As a result, trousers are now included in the uniform options, and a reading bench added in the playground. Pupils are keen to work together in different events to fundraise for local and national charities. Year 4 pupils in a religious education lesson displayed a strong understanding of the 'Christmas giving tree' and reflect carefully and thoughtfully how it may impact on the life of the receiver as well as appreciating the feelings this engenders in themselves. However, the strength and range of the pupils' contributions to the local community beyond the school remains limited when compared to their contributions to those within the school.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent understanding of cultural diversity and awareness of individual differences. They treat each other with kindness within a community that is calm and inclusive. Pupils identify strongly with all class members and gain a strong appreciation of other cultures and faiths such as through Diwali workshops. Pupils have a thoughtful understanding of British society and in particular tolerance. Year 2 PSHCEE books show that the children have an excellent understanding of how differences make them unique and that these differences should be celebrated. Pupils confirmed in discussion that that they enjoy learning about each other's cultures and each is equally valued. In the questionnaires, almost all parents felt that the school was successful in promoting, democracy, respect and tolerance.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and keep physically and mentally healthy. The youngest children told inspectors why they must wash hands to get rid of germs before eating. In pupil interviews they displayed an excellent understanding of a healthy diet. In written work pupils demonstrated a strong knowledge of food groups and the importance of a rainbow plate. They make sensible, informed food choices at lunch times. In interviews and questionnaires all pupils were confident that they know how to keep themselves safe online. They enjoy regular exercise, speaking enthusiastically about inter-school sports competitions. Pupils understand how to be mentally healthy and are comfortable seeking assistance from staff should they feel the need. In interview pupils spoke with appreciation of the care that they receive and the availability of adults with whom they can talk.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Timothy Cannell	Reporting inspector
Mrs Rebecca Smith	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Christopher Webster	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)