

Material change inspection report

4 November 2024

St Mary's School

Packhorse Road

Gerrards Cross

Buckinghamshire

SL9 8JQ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Inspection outcome

Material change request to increase the number of pupils registered to attend the school from 428 to 475.

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR Paragraphs 7a and 7b, 11,12,14,16

1. The implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for pupils' needs and to those pupils at risk. Staff show clear understanding of their responsibilities, including in those areas which are the focus of most recent changes in safeguarding guidance, in particular in identifying pupils who need early help. The school is implementing new guidance in the recording and analysis of attendance and had made available to parents the revised policy. However, it had not uploaded it to the website before the start of the inspection as required by the statutory guidance.
2. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are included within the safeguarding policy. Leaders follow statutory safeguarding guidance before appointing staff, including checking references and making on-line searches.
3. Leaders have introduced effective procedures to monitor and filter the use of the internet by pupils and staff. Senior leaders receive immediate notification if users are attempting to access inappropriate online content or language that might signify that a pupil is at risk. Governors regularly test the effectiveness of the procedures.
4. Staff show appropriate understanding of the staff code of conduct and safeguarding procedures. They use the school's low-level concerns procedures appropriately. Staff understand the training they have received in these areas, including the most recent training which reflected the new elements in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024. They know who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure and also that they can make a referral to children's services if necessary.
5. Suitable risk assessment procedures are provided for determining where immediate action is required in such cases, including referral to local agencies. The school has an effective understanding of the local guidance on reporting child-on-child abuse. Discussion with safeguarding leaders for the school and scrutiny of records confirmed that pupils receive help to address risks and prevent issues escalating.
6. Leaders act on and refer the early signs of risk or need, monitor any potential for radicalisation, and ensure the school listens to the views of individual pupils, as required by KCSIE. Safeguarding records are detailed and are securely stored.
7. Staff with particular safeguarding responsibilities monitor and support children when required. Suitable communication is maintained with parents where appropriate. Staff are clear that they cannot promise confidentiality if a pupil or parent makes a disclosure which requires action to be taken by the safeguarding team or external agencies. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and

show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. They confirm that the school takes actions when they express concerns.

8. The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local agencies and it is effectively implemented. It includes suitable definitions of abuse and provides appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. Arrangements for handling allegations against staff are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officers (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person whose services are no longer used where referral criteria are met to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA). Deputies are available in the absence of the safeguarding lead.
9. The oversight by governors of safeguarding is appropriate and includes a formal annual review. Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. There is regular contact between those with safeguarding responsibilities and a nominated governor to liaise. The school keeps a separate record of safeguarding issues related to any inappropriate racial or sexual behaviour and takes suitable action.
10. The training for the safeguarding team is appropriate. Training is held in the school for teaching and non-teaching staff. Training is of sufficient quality and scope and staff understanding is checked. Central records of staff attendance at training are kept systematically and these enable any staff who miss training to receive suitable update training. The safeguarding arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
11. The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a health and safety policy. The testing of electrical, water and other utilities is regularly undertaken. Regular surveys of trees are undertaken. Staff are trained effectively in health and safety. They deal promptly and appropriately with accidents if they occur. There have been no reportable serious accidents since the previous inspection. Records are detailed, although before the inspection leaders did not have in place a method of systematically overviewing the checks that had been undertaken without accessing individual files. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
12. The school has a fire risk (prevention) policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Fire procedures are understood by staff, and pupils and staff receive appropriate training. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
13. Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff. Pupils are very rarely out of the sight or hearing of staff and a clear supervision rota is in place. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
14. Governors and school leaders have drawn up a suitable, strategic risk plan to identify and mitigate any risk to pupils' wellbeing as a consequence of the increased in school numbers. The risk assessment policy clearly describes the lines of responsibility. There are appropriate assessments of risk for in-school activities, school visits, and for the needs of individual pupils both while in school and in the surrounding area. Appropriate action is taken to control identified risks. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
15. The school is likely to meet the standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

ISSR Paragraphs 18 to 21

16. All the required checks on staff, supply staff and governors are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. Contractors send the school up-to-date information on checks they have undertaken on their employees, and the school makes appropriate further checks on arrival.
17. The school maintains correctly an accurate single central record of appointments which includes the dates on which all checks have been completed. One minor administrative error was corrected during the inspection.
18. The school is likely to meet the standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraphs 23 to 29

19. 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 both on and off site is provided for physical education and outdoor play. The premises and accommodation are already suitable for an increase in numbers, although building is planned to further enhance the facilities.
20. The school is likely to meet the standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

21. The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.
22. The school is likely to meet the standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

23. Appropriate procedures are implemented which allow senior leaders and governors to manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements and ensure that the Standards are met. Governors and senior leaders regularly review policies and the manner in which they are implemented.
24. Governors have considered in detail all potential consequences of increasing numbers. They have assessed and mitigated the potential risk they have identified, for example in the quality of supervision. They have ensured that the wellbeing of pupils is promoted effectively.
25. The school is likely to meet the standards if the material change is implemented.

School details

School	St Mary's School
Department for Education number	825/6006
Registered charity number	310634
Address	St Mary's School Packhorse Road Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire SL9 8JQ
Phone number	01753 883370
Email address	office@stmarysgx.co.uk
Website	stmarysschool.co.uk
Proprietor	St Mary's, Gerrards Cross Ltd
Chair	Mr Derek Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Adams
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	434
Number of children in the early years	25
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 November 2023

Information about the school

27. St Mary's School is a day school for female pupils located in Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. The school consists of a prep school and a senior school which includes a sixth form. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees who act as governors.
28. There are 25 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class, both of which are accommodated in a separate building.
29. The school has identified 102 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nine pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
30. English is an additional language for 22 pupils.
31. The school states its aims are to provide excellence within a caring, happy environment underpinned by a value system based on tolerance and high moral standards in a Christian context. It seeks to provide a wide-ranging, stimulating and well-balanced education and offer challenge to its pupils within a supportive environment. The school aspires to develop independence, personal confidence, self-discipline and responsibility so that pupils achieve their potential and are ready to take their place in the world as responsible citizens.

Purpose of the material change inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002 following an application made by the school to the DfE to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards if the material change is implemented.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 November 2024

32. One reporting inspector visited the school for one day.
33. Inspection activities included
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
 - tour of the school site to check on fire and health and safety arrangements; implementation of risk assessments and supervision policy; suitability of premises and accommodation
 - discussions with a member of the governing body
 - discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
 - discussions with pupils and staff.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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