



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST MARY'S SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## St Mary's School

|                           |   |            |                   |
|---------------------------|---|------------|-------------------|
| Full Name of School       | <b>St Mary's School</b>   |            |                   |
| DfE Number                | <b>885/6000</b>   |            |                   |
| EYFS Number               | <b>205406</b>   |            |                   |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>1018889</b>  |            |                   |
| Address                   | <b>St Mary's School<br/>Mount Battenhall<br/>Worcester<br/>Worcestershire<br/>WR5 2HP</b> |            |                   |
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| Head                      | <b>Mrs Catherine Jawaheer</b>   |            |                   |
| Chair of Governors        | <b>Mr Peter Murphy</b>  |            |                   |
| Age Range                 | <b>0 to 18</b>  |            |                   |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>309</b>  |            |                   |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Girls</b>  |            |                   |
| Numbers by Age            | 0-2 (EYFS):   | <b>34</b>  | 5-11: <b>51</b>   |
|                           | 3-5 (EYFS):   | <b>68</b>  | 11-18: <b>156</b> |
| Number of Day Pupils      | Total:  | <b>309</b> |                   |
| Head of EYFS Setting      | <b>Mrs A Guida Jones</b>  |            |                   |
| EYFS Gender               | <b>Mixed</b>  |            |                   |
| Inspection dates          | <b>28 Sep 2010 to 29 Sep 2010</b>   |            |                   |

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in November 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 St Mary's School was founded in 1934 by the sisters of the order of Marie Madeleine Postel. It occupies historic premises and extensive grounds on the outskirts of Worcester. The school is now run by trustees who act as the governing council and lease the land and buildings from the order. Although no nuns now teach at the school, the order is represented on the board of trustees.
- 1.2 St Mary's is a Catholic school but welcomes pupils from other faiths and denominations. It states that its purpose is to give pupils an excellent education within a safe and caring environment, founded upon the spiritual teachings of the gospel, in which every pupil will be encouraged to realise their maximum academic potential, to develop self-esteem, an unselfish concern for others and to become a responsible member of society.
- 1.3 St Mary's offers day education to 266 girls from three months to eighteen years of age and to 43 boys up to the age of five. One hundred and two children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); this includes six children in Reception, whose classroom is in the prep department. Thirty-four children currently attend the Nursery which offers year-round care. The youngest children, (up to eighteen months) are looked after in the Cottage Nursery, a separate building in the school grounds. They then move on to the Kindergarten Nursery until they are three when they join the kindergarten pre-school. Fifty-one pupils from Years 1 to 6 are in the prep department and 156 are in the senior school, of whom 26 study in the sixth form.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in 2006, a new head has been appointed, taking up her post in September 2010. Management systems have been restructured and the curriculum has been expanded in the senior school.
- 1.5 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds including skilled, professional and business families. Most live within a ten-mile radius of the school. Approximately one-fifth of pupils are Catholic and a small number are from ethnic minorities and faiths other than Christian. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified forty-nine pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) of whom sixteen receive specialist learning support. Of the seven pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), one receives language support.
- 1.6 According to nationally standardised tests, the ability profile of pupils is slightly above the national average in the prep department, is above the national average in Years 7 to 11 and is a little below the national average in the sixth form.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 At all stages pupils achieve well, not only in their academic studies but also in the many other activities they undertake. They approach their endeavours sensibly with vigour and interest, and this, combined with thoughtful and effective teaching, enables them to develop their basic skills to a high level. The school largely achieves its aim to encourage its pupils to realise their maximum academic potential.
- 2.2 In the lessons observed and in the sample of work scrutinized, pupils in both the prep department and the senior school were judged to have attained high levels of competence in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They are articulate and responded readily in class using specialist vocabulary where appropriate; prep department pupils read aloud fluently and with understanding; pupils listened carefully to their teachers and to each other; and senior school pupils were able to write extended and thoughtful answers. Most pupils were at ease using numbers and mathematical concepts which they could apply to other subjects. Little evidence was seen of the application of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Pupils had the confidence to ask for clarification in class, and to express their own ideas and opinions. Exuberant displays of art throughout the school demonstrate their creativity.
- 2.3 Results in national tests at the age of 11 for the last three years for which comparative data is available have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. At GCSE, results are also good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools and, at A level, results have been similar to the national average for girls in maintained schools. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability nationally. In 2010 almost nine-tenths of pupils gained five or more subjects with grades of A\* to C at GCSE and more than half of the results were at A\* or A. At A level, nearly half of results were graded A\*, A, or B. Sixth-form leavers were successful in gaining entrance to higher education institutions of their choice. Pupils with LDD or EAL achieve well in relation to their abilities.
- 2.4 At all ages, pupils also achieve well in national music and drama examinations, gaining many distinctions and merits. Successes have also been won by many girls in other extra-curricular activities, such as choral singing, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, Young Enterprise, and sport at school, county and national level.
- 2.5 In both sections of the school pupils benefit from a wide ranging curriculum that follows the National Curriculum but also goes beyond it. For example, prep department pupils begin languages from Year 1 and in the senior school and sixth form girls appreciate the extensive choice and combinations of subjects that they are offered. The scheme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well thought out with appropriate topics introduced at different ages. The programme of extra-curricular activities is also broad ranging and both complements and extends the mainstream curriculum.
- 2.6 Thorough and careful teaching in small classes, evident in both the prep department and the senior school, contributes strongly to the pupils' successes. Work was very successfully tailored to the needs of individual pupils in the prep department. In the senior school, teachers were aware of the learning needs of their pupils and often

provided for these sensitively and unobtrusively, but effective matching of tasks to pupils' needs was not always evident. Girls apply themselves diligently, respond well to their teachers and work sensibly both individually and in pairs or groups. Assessment is regular and girls are motivated by understanding their levels of achievement and the targets they should attain. Marking in both sections of the school is regular and encouraging but does not consistently provide pupils with clear information that would help them to improve.

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

- 2.7 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school, thus fulfilling its aims. Pupils grow into confident, thoughtful and articulate young women who embrace the school's ethos and the compassionate nature of the community. They are supported in this by excellent pastoral care and by effective arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety.
- 2.8 In both the prep department and the senior school pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. They take advantage of the opportunities provided for reflection in the weekly masses and the quiet time in their form rooms at the end of each day. They offer their own prayers on the prayer board outside the chapel which they can visit for private contemplation if they so wish. In the prep department, pupils enjoy adding a contribution to the 'Tree of Compliments' to thank someone who has helped them. Pupils throughout the school have developed high levels of self-esteem and are confident in expressing their views. They are interested in and informed about the faiths and cultures of their fellows, and all pupils feel able to practise their religions.
- 2.9 Pupils of all ages approach moral issues thoughtfully and demonstrate a strong sense of right and wrong. They enjoy the opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas in their PSHE and other lessons. They appreciate and understand the school rules and believe them to be fair.
- 2.10 Pupils' social development is exceptional. Pupils in both sections of the school are enthusiastic about the responsibilities they are entrusted with as form, house or school officers. The senior school council is active and pupils clearly value the chance to contribute and are confident that they are listened to. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The excellent relations between pupils themselves and between pupils and staff are characterised by kindness and consideration. Every Year 7 pupil has a 'reading partner' in the sixth form and a group of sixth formers has set up a Greek club for younger girls. Pupils of all ages work willingly to raise money for charity, for example for their sister school in Kerala, and have developed a keen awareness of the needs of others.
- 2.11 Pupils' cultural awareness is highly developed. They eagerly support school productions and musical performances, and the art work on display around both the prep department and senior school shows a high level of artistic attainment and appreciation. Pupils value the opportunities for trips and visits to cultural sites and events. They have an appropriate understanding of the public institutions and services in England.
- 2.12 Pupils' personal development is fully supported by the high quality of the provision for their welfare, health and safety. Pastoral care is extremely strong throughout the school. Form teachers in the prep department and form tutors in the senior school play key roles in the care of the pupils. Pupils are confident that there is always an

adult to whom they can turn. Pupils in Years 11 to 13 appreciate the guidance offered by their individual academic coaches. The anti-bullying policy is thorough but pupils are not issued with an appropriately written summary. However, pupils report that bullying is rare and say that any such problems would be rapidly sorted out. The policy for the safeguarding of pupils is effective, although its implementation has had minor weaknesses in the past. Pupils learn about healthy eating in lessons and are provided with nutritious meals. They understand the importance of taking exercise and participate enthusiastically in sport.

- 2.13 Health and safety are taken very seriously. Attendance registers are accurately maintained and absences followed up. The health and safety policy is carefully written and assiduously implemented. Effective and appropriate risk assessments are in place, including fire risk assessments and those for trips and visits.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.14 The governance, leadership and management of the school are good and effectively implement the aims of the school, providing well for the education, welfare, health and safety of the pupils. The board of trustees as the governing body works closely with the senior staff with whom they share a vision for the future of the school.
- 2.15 The governing body is organised efficiently to provide support for the senior leadership team, with each governor taking on oversight of a particular area of school activity. The governors are aware of the extent of their responsibilities, which they take very seriously, but they have not yet set up robust systems for obtaining independent up-to-date information on regulatory requirements. Governors are fully involved in planning for the future of the school and regularly consider and review policies including the safeguarding policy. Governors have also undertaken safeguarding training.
- 2.16 Management structures have recently been reviewed and a new 'vision and leadership team' which includes the most senior staff from each section of the school, works closely with the governors on long-term strategic planning. The school improvement plan (SIP) articulates the school's aims with short and longer-term objectives and links these with subject improvement plans, making it a potentially powerful tool for the progress of the school. However the SIP does not include discrete sections on the EYFS or the prep department. Currently, the lack of formal systems for monitoring the work of the EYFS hinders its development. Since the last inspection, middle management structures in the rest of the school have been strengthened, improving the effectiveness of pastoral care and the monitoring of the girls' academic progress.
- 2.17 The school has developed a large number of policies. Whilst the contents fulfil requirements, the usefulness of many policies is limited by their excessive length. Although there have been a few minor irregularities in the past, arrangements for the safer recruitment of staff are now thorough and robust. All staff have undergone checks of suitability with the Criminal Records Bureau. The centralised register of appointments is properly maintained. Every interview panel includes a member of staff trained in safer recruitment. In the past, however, references, previous employment history and declarations of medical fitness had not always been checked for some temporary visiting staff.

- 2.18 With the exception of the outside play area at the Cottage Nursery, the quality of the premises and accommodation is high. Classrooms and specialised teaching areas are well-equipped, light and airy. Sports facilities are generous. The buildings are well maintained.
- 2.19 The school has developed effective links with parents. Parents and potential parents are supplied with all requisite information. Reports on pupils' progress are informative and the complaints policy is comprehensive; the school has received no formal complaints recently. Responses to the parental questionnaire issued shortly before the inspection indicate a high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents were particularly pleased with the range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, with the high standards of pastoral care, with the worthwhile attitudes and values promoted by the school, and communication with the school. A small minority of parents indicated that they would like to receive more information on their child's progress, that they would like more opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and that they were not satisfied with the way concerns were handled. Inspection findings do not uphold any of these reservations.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

3.1 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore must:

- implement all appropriate safeguarding arrangements by ensuring that the references and employment histories of all staff are checked before appointment. [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety ];
- ensure that checks to confirm the medical fitness of all staff are carried out before appointment. [Part 4, paragraph 19(2)(b), under The suitability of staff and proprietors].

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

3.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that, in both the prep department and the senior school, marking consistently provides pupils with clear advice on how to improve.
2. Include in the school improvement plan discrete sections on the EYFS and the prep department.
3. Ensure that the governing body has access to up-to-date independent information on legal requirements.
4. In the EYFS, ensure that information from assessment is used to set the next steps in learning for individual children.
5. In the EYFS, implement existing plans to refurbish the outdoor play area at the Cottage Nursery.
6. Develop systematic monitoring and evaluation in order to plan effectively for the improvement and development of the EYFS provision.

#### **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. Careful planning for children's needs by experienced and well qualified staff, together with the creative use of resources, ensure that children achieve well and make good progress. The good care provided contributes to the ease with which children settle into routines. Management has taken action on all of the issues from the previous inspection but plans to improve the provision further are not defined by systematic monitoring and evaluation.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 Leadership and management of the setting are good overall. Effective implementation of suitable policies, procedures and risk assessments protect children from harm and danger. Safe recruitment practices identify suitable people to work with the children. The setting actively promotes equality and inclusion. Suitable professional development programmes ensure staff are well trained and effectively deployed. Resources are good and used well; particularly good use is made of the conservatory and outdoor play areas in the main Early Years setting to promote children's learning and development. However, use of the outdoor play area at the Cottage Nursery is currently restricted as it awaits refurbishment. Links with parents are strong and they are kept well informed about their children's learning and development. Feedback from questionnaires and discussion indicates overwhelming support and satisfaction with the setting. Effective links with the prep department and other providers contribute to smooth transitions at every level. Informal monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but priorities to improve and develop the provision are not identified in the school development plan.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 Provision for the children's learning, development and welfare is good. Staff provide interesting and varied learning opportunities for them and the regular exchange of information with parents helps them plan for children's individual needs and interests. There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. The outdoor accommodation within the main Early Years setting encourages children to experience, explore and investigate a range of resources, sometimes prompted by open-ended questioning by staff. In each class adults are vigilant in their care of children and help them to develop safe and healthy habits and to behave well. Assessments and observation are used well to monitor children's progress, but only in classes where there is best practice is assessment information used to set the next steps in learning for individual children.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 The outcomes for the children in the EYFS are good. Children are happy and enjoy their time in the setting. The youngest children develop good language and communication skills by listening to stories and songs and by interacting with adults. Children of all ages develop their co-ordination skills by exploring different objects and materials such as water, play-dough, paint and various types of paper and materials, and through play with equipment in the outdoor environment. Although children in the Cottage Nursery have access to the school's extensive grounds, they have fewer opportunities to play and learn outdoors at present as refurbishment of their facility has not yet been completed. The older children show good levels of independence by managing their own snack boxes and dressing themselves. They understand the need to wash their hands at important times, make healthy choices and take regular exercise. They understand the importance of keeping themselves safe and respond well to instruction. They participate in fund-raising for charities. The children in the Reception class demonstrate good early writing, number and ICT skills and, by the end of the Reception year, all children exceeded the goals expected for that age in all areas of learning.

#### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

#### **Complaints since the last inspection**

- 4.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of trustees, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mrs Ann Mayou         | Reporting Inspector   |
| Mrs Claire Delo       | Deputy Head, IAPS school  |
| Mrs Jane Prescott     | Deputy Head, GSA school   |
| Ms Sheila Boyle       | Early Years Lead Inspector  |
| Ms Sally Dibb-Holland | Early Years Team Inspector (Deputy Head of nursery and pre-preparatory sections, IAPS school) |