



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Mary's School			
DfE number	865/6016			
Registered charity number	309482			
Address	St Mary's School Curzon St Calne Wiltshire SN11 0DF			
Telephone number	01249 857200			
Email address	office@stmaryscalne.org			
Head	Dr Felicia Kirk			
Chairman of governors	Mr Simon Knight			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	347			
	Boys	N/A	Girls	347
	Day pupils	70	Boarders	277
	Seniors	237	Sixth Form	110
Inspection dates	17 to 18 May 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates on behalf of the DfE, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest report on the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chairman of governors and the safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Kate McCarey	Reporting inspector
Miss Julia Bowden	Team inspector (Senior teacher, GSA school)
Mrs Anne Griffiths	Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Nicholas Weaver	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Liam Copley	Team inspector for boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Mary's School, Calne, is a selective day and boarding school for girls aged between eleven and eighteen years. It is an Anglican foundation established in Calne in 1873, and moved to its present site in 1909. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors who also have oversight of the prep school, St Margaret's. The school accommodates boarders and day pupils in seven houses, one for each year group in the school.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new lower sixth boarding house has been completed and three other boarding houses have been refurbished and extended. In addition, the kitchen and dining hall have been refurbished, as have other teaching and learning spaces in the school. A post of head of well-being has been created and a mindfulness course has been introduced in Year 10. The working week has been changed to lengthen lesson times to one hour; in addition, computer science has been introduced at GCSE and core maths at A level.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to develop in young women the academic and moral strength for them to become bold, resourceful, well-balanced individuals who have the capacity to lead and shape the modern world.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Eighty per cent of pupils board, most coming from the UK and about fifteen per cent are from overseas. Around half the pupils come from Wiltshire and the surrounding counties, whilst a fifth are from London and the home counties. Most are from families with professional backgrounds. The school selects its pupils by academic ability, and standardised tests demonstrate that the ability profile of both the senior school and the sixth form is above the national average. The school identifies forty-two pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thirty-seven of whom receive support mostly for specific learning difficulties and mild autistic spectrum disorder. No pupil has an education and health care plan or a statement of educational needs. Of the twenty-four pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), thirteen require and receive support for their English. The school identifies pupils who excel across the spectrum of academic and other areas such as sport, art, drama or music. Enrichment and extension activities including an academic scholarship programme are provided for them. Since the previous inspection, the school has stopped offering early entry to GCSE examinations in modern foreign language and mathematics.

- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report 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>
Lower Fourth	Year 7
Middle Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils' excellent progress and attainment is underpinned by highly individualised provision.
- Pupils draw knowledge, skills and understanding from a wide range of sources and display sophisticated study skills for their age.
- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to their learning, and they are highly productive individually and in co-operation with others.
- Pupils are confident and articulate communicators.
- Pupils excel in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities both individually and collectively, and benefit from the excellent coaching and commitment from staff.

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

- Pupils have excellent self-confidence and self-awareness for their age, and make intelligent choices about their learning and personal lives.
- Pupils have a strong sense of morality. They accept responsibility for their own behaviour and are respectful of all members of the school community.
- Pupils' personal development is enhanced by their experiences in the boarding houses and by the excellent relationships between pupils and staff.
- Pupils contribute very positively to the school, the local community and to charitable causes, many of which they choose themselves.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of excellent outcomes for pupils the school might wish to consider:

- Further developing opportunities for senior pupils to engage effectively with younger pupils in a more meaningful and personal way, to the benefit of both.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are educated to a high level in accordance with the school's stated aim. They acquire excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their lessons. Pupils are intellectually curious and demonstrate high levels of performance and creativity in their wide ranging extra-curricular activities.
- 3.3 In the years 2013 to 2015, the most recent three years in which comparative data is available, results at GCSE and A level have been well above the national average for maintained schools. In IGCSE, examination results have been higher than worldwide norms. In 2016 this academic success continued. Almost all pupils move on to their first choice of university and their destinations include those which are highly competitive. They are well supported in their choices by a programme of university visitors and tailored advice at an individual level. Throughout their school career, pupils' performance and progress is carefully monitored through regular assessment and carefully targeted support. Pupils themselves take charge of their learning and make rapid progress.
- 3.4 Pupils with SEND or EAL are well supported in class and in individual learning support lessons, and they achieve standards in external examinations that are in line with and sometimes better than their peers. Those pupils whom the school identifies as the most able benefit from a broad and demanding scholarship programme where they take part in regular workshop sessions, which have included an investigation into the development of countries over the last 200 years and solving a puzzle attributed to Einstein. Pupils embrace these opportunities with great enthusiasm and can continue their interesting conversations with each other in their boarding houses, where they said that heated exchanges often take place.
- 3.5 Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and they readily acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for success. In lessons, they settle to work quickly and take part in a wide variety of activities with enthusiasm. They were observed creating mind maps to aid revision in religious studies (RS) and history, using practical skills in a chemistry experiment, analysing graphs of disease occurrence in geography, and demonstrating strong linguistic skills in both modern and ancient languages. Pupils have extremely well-developed physical skills, and enjoy their physical education and games lessons. Throughout the school, relationships between pupils and their teaching staff are excellent and classrooms are characterised by a sense of purpose engendered by lively and well-paced teaching. Pupils are avid questioners who thrive in an atmosphere that is marked by a willingness to tackle a task and get it done, and they feel that they can take risks without fear of failure. They receive individual feedback on their work from their teachers, and a very large majority of pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses expressed the view that their lessons are interesting and that marking helps them to improve their work. Most of the marking scrutinised during the inspection supported this view.

- 3.6 Pupils benefit greatly from their contact with individual tutors who monitor their academic and personal progress throughout their time at school. In interview, pupils expressed the view that this relationship is key to their success and that they feel exceptionally well supported by these tutors. Pupils display sophisticated study skills for their age. They take independent learning in their stride, are resilient and enjoy researching topics for themselves as part of the critical thinking programme as well as in more formal research projects. Within the extended project qualification, an increasing number of sixth form pupils are achieving considerable success. Recent topics have included the use of silkworms in human tissue engineering and an investigation into whether bariatric surgery is ever appropriate for children. Pupils are also reflective learners, critiquing their own work and that of their peers regularly and effectively, recognising their own strengths and weaknesses and using this knowledge to further their progress. In several curriculum areas, pupils demonstrate an excellent ability to analyse information from a variety of sources and evaluate their significance. Open-ended tasks set by teachers who have excellent subject knowledge enable pupils to develop higher-order study skills. Their extended writing is assured, well-structured and accurately referenced. Pupils are articulate oral communicators who speak clearly and confidently when presenting their work to others or taking part in chapel assemblies. They listen carefully to the contributions of others and are very supportive of them.
- 3.7 Pupils are highly competent in their application of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Sixth form pupils confidently used mathematical techniques to analyse graphs in geography, and Year 9 pupils worked out split times by looking at their steady pace rate while running a 1500 metre race. Non-specialist mathematicians in the sixth form benefit from a mathematics studies course which helps keep their numerical skills secure, and pupils readily apply mathematical skills to their science work. Pupils have very well-developed skills of ICT and use them across the curriculum. Many choose to submit work electronically to the virtual learning environment where it can be assessed online. Younger pupils also use ICT skills to produce attractive and informative wall posters on a variety of themes, such as extreme weather and the impact of Christianity on British society. Software is effectively used to facilitate creative projects in art and music.
- 3.8 Pupils excel in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities both individually and collectively, and the expert coaching of staff is a strong contributory factor to their success. A very large majority of parents and pupils agreed in their questionnaire responses that the range of activities is a positive factor in pupils' achievement. Pupils enjoy the challenge of competitive sport. Sports teams and individuals have had success in lacrosse, where individual girls have represented England, and in tennis, netball, swimming, athletics, biathlon and equestrianism. One lower sixth Young Enterprise team developed a business, marketing and selling varieties of tea and went through to the regional finals of the competition, in which they were recognised as the Best Company of the Year in the South West. Pupils achieve success in mathematical challenges. In 2016, twelve pupils achieved advanced certificates of the European Computer Driving Licence, and four pupils gained Gold Crest awards through the Engineering Education scheme. Pupils have achieved success at a regional level in the English-Speaking Union's debating competition, and many enjoy the challenges presented by participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme and achieve success at bronze, silver and gold levels. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched by a programme of visiting speakers for all age groups. These have recently included lectures on science and religion, the work of Bletchley Park, and music psychology and therapy.

- 3.9 Pupils achieve highly in the creative arts. They engage avidly in musical ensembles such as the opera ensemble, the junior concert, the chamber choir and many instrumental groups including the symphony orchestra and the swing band. Many of these groups perform in prestigious locations such as St Paul's Cathedral and the chamber choir has broadcast on Radio 3 and received outstanding reviews. Pupils benefit from overseas musical tours which broaden their experience. In drama, all pupils in Years 7 and 8 take part in a musical production and Year 9 become a theatre company for a term and produce their own show at a local theatre. Pupils enthusiastically participate in the school musical and some gain much experience of performing by taking a production to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe annually. Drama pupils at GCSE and A Level have attended a workshop on physical theatre with a renowned theatre company. In art, many pupils find pleasure and achieve success in painting, drawing and photography where they are encouraged to pursue their interests with a great deal of autonomy.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils have excellent levels of self-confidence and self-awareness for their age and make intelligent choices about their learning and personal lives. Pupils participate willingly in weekly sessions with their personal tutors whom they describe as their 'first port of call' for any educational or personal issues. The recent strategic decision by the school's leadership team to develop the previous model of individual support through closer integration with the house tutor teams is proving to be a strong contributory factor to positive outcomes for pupils who are mature for their age, confident and articulate. They argue cogently and with determination and work out their views in conversations with each other and with staff. In the boarding houses, pupils enjoy the independence which boarding fosters, and their levels of self-confidence and discipline thus develop as they move through the school. In lessons, pupils display resilience and have a strong desire to learn from mistakes which they see as a learning opportunity. They have no fear of failure and are willing to take risks in their learning, in line with the school's mantra 'Calne Girls Can'.
- 4.3 Pupils have strong decision-making skills and they enjoy the autonomy they are provided to decide about their subjects and their future paths beyond school. Senior pupils are given support in making decisions about their university destinations, and younger pupils undergo programmes to build the attributes which will enable them to leave the school as confident and resourceful young adults. Pupils value the comprehensive personal development programme which contains units of study around well-being and building resilience, as observed in a lesson where younger pupils reflected on an experience where they had been unsuccessful and what they had learned from it. Pupils understand and are appreciative that the well-being programme emphasises positive thinking, altruism and gratitude as well as emotional and physical health, and the value of positive relationships.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong moral sense and can provide convincing reasons for the values which they hold. They accept responsibility for their own behaviour and throughout the inspection period they were courteous, calm and purposeful. Pupils believe that the culture of the school is characterised by kindness and concern for others, both within and beyond the school community. They look out for each other and do not tolerate acts of unkindness.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong sense that more unites them than divides them, and are very accepting of difference and diversity. Some pupils come to the school from a variety of countries, and their backgrounds and cultures are celebrated and shared. Different cultural groups take assemblies, registration in Year 9 is often completed in different languages and country-themed suppers are a regular feature. Thus all pupils come to better understand their own and other cultures and traditions. Pupils understand the needs of others and take advantage of opportunities to contribute to the school community and where possible to the community beyond. They assist at a local school for pupils with complex needs, both in classes and by helping individual pupils to read. Pupils also carry out community work within the service component of their DofE, helping in the library and with younger pupils. The school is currently looking at ways to expand opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community. Many pupils are involved in choosing and organising charitable giving for a wide variety of causes. The activities which raise money are firmly pupil led and executed. During the inspection, girls were inspired by a talk about refugees in Syria and immediately responded by making plans to organise a charity fundraising event. Visits abroad which take place for a variety of reasons such as sporting tours, musical tours and those connected to curriculum work, widen the experience of those pupils who participate and encourage a world view. Pupils in interview spoke of their life-changing experiences in Russia, China and Nepal, and in the battlefields of northern France and Belgium.

- 4.6 Pupils have a strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life as illustrated by their active participation in art, music and theatre throughout the school. They enjoy the daily chapel assemblies, many of which they lead, and the chapel lies at the heart of the school where it can be a place for quiet reflection during a busy day. Pupils learn about other faiths within the RS curriculum and the school currently offers a GCSE short course to all pupils. They spoke of their free choice about confirmation, emphasising that they are free to complete the course or drop out at any stage if they feel it is not right for them. Pupils are very tolerant of those with other faiths and beliefs, and enjoy learning about them.
- 4.7 Pupils have highly developed social skills and those of all ages have opportunities to engage in leadership roles within houses and the school. The horizontally structured houses are a strong contributory factor in enabling even the youngest pupils to take on leadership roles, such as in the Year 9 theatre project or charity events. Senior pupils run the 'Companies'; vertically grouped bodies of pupils which exist for competitions and community activities and events. The head girls' team fulfil demanding leadership roles to good effect – leading the school council and organising charity fundraising events, and they provide excellent role models of team work for younger pupils, though they are not routinely involved in the junior houses at present. Through the various councils, pupils of all ages take an active role in making sure that their views are heard and in effecting change. Recently they have achieved changes in the content of the personal development programme by making their views known. Pupils also learn about the democratic process and the values that characterise modern Britain today; they engage in political debate and listen to visiting speakers from across the political spectrum, thus achieving a balanced view of the current political landscape. Pupils work well collaboratively across and within age groups. In the theatre props club, pupils were working together to produce props for musical productions such as a cake for *Matilda* and a radio for *Annie*. They are highly engaged in problem solving, suggesting possibilities and thinking them through. Pupils were observed rehearsing devised drama pieces together; they work in teams, such as in the Year 12 Young Enterprise projects and in the many 'Company' activities that involve teamwork across year groups.
- 4.8 Pupils have a strong understanding of how to be physically and mentally healthy, and they appreciate the need to find a balance in their lives to maintain their health and well-being. They enjoy the large number of opportunities which are provided to ensure their physical health both within and beyond the curriculum, and they take part in physical activity with enthusiasm whether in training for athletics, swimming or in activities such as fencing which they may not have tried before. Pupils eat well and are very positive about the quality and variety of the food provided. They are very appreciative of the well-being programmes at the school, including mindfulness, and of the provision for and education about mental health issues within the personal development programme. Pupils speak confidently and positively of the way in which boarding contributes to their personal development and they are confident that they can turn to plenty of people for support should they have a concern.
- 4.9 Pupils at the school are well-rounded, articulate and self-confident young people who leave the school able to face the future with confidence, thus fulfilling the school's stated aim to develop in their pupils the moral strength to become bold, resourceful, well-balanced individuals who have the capacity to lead and shape our modern world.