

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

Mount St Mary's College

College Road
Spinkhill
Derbyshire
S21 3YL

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'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and proprietors have appropriate knowledge and discharge their responsibilities effectively. Risk is understood and managed carefully. Governors check the school's provision diligently to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that enables pupils to develop skills and understanding across the full range of subjects. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to practise reading, writing and oration so that pupils develop communication skills well. The academic curriculum is suitable for pupils of all ages and aptitudes, including those pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teaching enables pupils to make good progress. The needs of pupils with EAL are swiftly identified and suitable support is in place to enable them to become proficient in the use of English.
3. Leaders ensure that pupils who have SEND are well supported to learn effectively. Staff devise appropriate plans, strategies and one-to-one or small group support to enable these pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress. This support enhances pupils' learning. However, the support adults provide within the classroom is not consistently effective. Teachers do not always guide and support pupils who have SEND well enough to ensure they build on the good progress they make as a result of the additional support they receive outside of lessons.
4. Leaders have developed a curriculum and ethos which encourage mutual respect for all groups of people. Behaviour is good. Bullying is rare and when it occurs, staff deal with it swiftly. Effective health and safety policies and procedures promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
5. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum covers aspects of human, social and economic education and prepares pupils effectively for life in modern British society. Pupils show respect for school rules, the law and other cultures. They understand right from wrong and accept responsibility for their own behaviour. The new careers guidance programme meets the needs of the pupils by allowing them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options.
6. The programme of relationship and sex education (RSE) does not meet pupils' needs when topics are not taught early enough in their school life.
7. Safeguarding procedures are effective. Staff are suitably trained. They deal with any concerns appropriately. Pupils feel safe in school, and they have adults they can talk to if they have any worries. Pupils appreciate the monthly online welfare survey where they can share any concerns they have.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

- Ensure that pupils with SEND are appropriately supported in all lessons.
- Review the delivery, timing and age-appropriate content of RSE education so that it more closely meets the needs of the pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors actively promote pupils' wellbeing by checking and ensuring that Standards are met consistently. Governors are knowledgeable and understand their role. They carry out effective monitoring of the school's provision, including of the boarding provision. Through its various committees, governors are kept informed of the school's performance. Governors ensure that all policies follow guidance and meet the aims and ethos of the school. Governors' scrutiny of all matters pertaining to safeguarding is rigorous.
9. Leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to discharge their responsibilities. They ensure that their understanding of regulatory requirements is up to date and that policies and procedures are implemented to fulfil these requirements.
10. Leaders conduct an extensive and detailed analysis of all aspects of the school's performance and clearly know the school and its relative strengths well. Leaders are ambitious for pupils and prioritise their needs. The thorough school improvement plan is publicised widely, including to pupils. It identifies key areas for further improvement. Middle and senior leaders check the standard of the plan and there is a comprehensive system of support and, where necessary, intervention to ensure that the quality of teaching is effective.
11. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is of paramount importance by maintaining a studious overview of pupils' safety and welfare, and by identifying and managing risk appropriately.
12. There is effective leadership and management of the boarding provision. There are useful and productive links between academic and residential staff. Senior boarding staff are knowledgeable and experienced and have appropriate training in the management of and in the practice of boarding. They use this training well to ensure that boarders' welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Boarders benefit from well-organised houses that pupils say are like a second home to them.
13. All required information is either provided on the school website or parents are informed as to its availability. Particulars of the school's academic performance during preceding school year, including results of any public examinations, are made available to parents. Leaders liaise with other agencies as appropriate and in a timely manner. Risk and its mitigation are well understood. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.
14. The school has a suitable complaints policy and procedures. Complaints are dealt with under a three-stage process and any concerns are managed effectively, in line with the policy and in a timely manner. Detailed records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Pupils have well-developed linguistic and literacy skills. Pupils are articulate and opportunities to take part in drama productions and to speak in public contribute to their communication skills. Pupils are competent mathematicians and use their numeracy skills effectively in a range of subjects. Leaders ensure that pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of British values through the PSHE programme.
16. Leaders encourage pupils to be creative thinkers by providing many opportunities for aesthetic expression. The artwork and photography on display is of a high standard. Music and drama play an important part in school life with pupils benefiting from opportunities to learn instruments and take part in annual school productions. Approximately 20% of pupils learn an instrument, and the majority of these pass their grade exams with either a distinction or merit. A similar number of pupils take drama exams with equal success.
17. Pupils develop theoretical and practical skills successfully in areas such as technical drawing. For example, in computer studies pupils have used their understanding of coding to develop a banking App.
18. Teaching is well planned and tailored towards the needs of the pupils. Most lessons include well-structured tasks, which build upon previous learning and reinforce prior knowledge and understanding. Classrooms are well resourced, and teachers use these resources effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and to challenge their thinking. Consequently, pupils are actively engaged in their lessons, assimilate new concepts and develop their understanding and skills. Progress is good, including for the more able pupils. Leaders monitor the standard of teaching and learning by observing lessons and scrutinising work. This ensures consistency of approach and has helped to raise academic standards. Almost all pupils gain GCSE and A-level grades in line with or above those expected from their starting points.
19. Pupils who have SEND make good progress and often exceed expectations. This is because of the school's early identification of need and the effective support strategies employed within the SEND department. However, adult support for pupils who have SEND within classrooms is variable. All teachers know which of their pupils are on the SEND register, and in most lessons, support is tailored specifically to the needs of the individual. In other lessons support is not consistently effective. Leaders have identified that provision for pupils with SEND should be improved in lessons and this is a target on the school improvement plan.
20. Pupils with EAL appreciate the welcoming and supportive environment and are particularly positive about the support they receive in the boarding houses. Appropriate provision is made for them within the classroom, ensuring that they make good progress.
21. Leaders have devised and implemented an effective assessment and feedback policy. Teachers use a *what went well* and *even better if* system. Pupils think about their teachers' comments and respond to them. Pupils find this system particularly useful in helping them understand how they can improve their work. This process supports pupils' good progress.

22. Leaders offer a varied extra-curricular programme, which includes a range of activities, such as sports clubs, crafts and technical pursuits. Boarders in particular value the extra-curricular activities which enable them to develop skills beyond the classroom. Activities, such as the Combined Cadet Force and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme help to develop pupils' teamwork and leadership skills.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant standards are met

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

23. Leaders have devised a PSHE programme which includes lessons on physical and mental health and learning about a range of cultures and faiths. Moral issues are routinely discussed in PSHE lessons. Pupils are encouraged to talk, ask questions and challenge each other and thus think deeply about issues and situations.
24. Pupils, including boarders, speak warmly about the support they receive. They appreciate the online programme which they can use to check on their mental health and know that they can approach teachers with any concerns, either in person or via an email system. Through various committees, pupils contribute to the wellbeing of the school community and bring about change, such as alterations to school food as a result of their feedback.
25. While the programme of relationship and sex education (RSE) meets the regulatory requirements, pupils question its relevance and usefulness to them. Because the programme is delivered largely at the end of each school year, this means that it does not always meet pupils' emerging needs. The content of the programme helps pupils develop an understanding of healthy relationships and the concept of mutual respect, including for differences among people.
26. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is developed through the school's Catholic ethos together with an effective religious education curriculum which covers both spiritual and moral issues and includes study of the major world religions. The school has links with the local church, and pupils attend a range of events including Christmas, harvest and Easter celebrations.
27. Through both the PSHE and the physical education (PE) curriculums, pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Meals are healthy and nutritious with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables available. There are many opportunities for sport, both in organised games and PE lessons, and in less formal play.
28. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is positive and pupils apply themselves with focus and determination. Leaders have drawn up a behaviour policy in line with the school's ethos and which is understood and supported by the pupils. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with appropriately and there is very little bullying. When incidents occur, staff intervene appropriately. Pupils generally show a good level of respect for others. Although on occasions older pupils can display disrespectful behaviour. Where discriminatory language is used, teachers are quick to take effective action. Staff supervision helps to ensure that play rarely becomes rough or argumentative.
29. The school maintains and stores admission and attendance registers correctly, and any unexpected absences are followed up. When pupils leave the school, their destination is recorded according to local procedures to guard against the risk of pupils missing education.
30. The school premises and accommodation, including the boarding houses, are well maintained. Health and safety policies and procedures are implemented effectively, and precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills are held termly, and the outcomes are recorded so that any lessons can be learned. Staff receive regular fire-safety training.

31. Suitable arrangements and accommodation exist for the care of pupils, including boarders, who become unwell or are injured. All staff receive regular training in first aid and an appropriate number of staff are suitably qualified to administer first aid.
32. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is made available to parents and is known and understood by boarders. Boarders' views are sought and acted upon through a variety of means, including regular boarding house meetings.
33. Boarding staff prioritise boarders' health needs ensuring that they are fully met. There is a suitable programme of induction for new boarders. The privacy of boarders is respected. Boarders' personal possessions are stored safely, and regular laundry provision is in place. All boarders are provided with good-quality nutritionally balanced meals and a variety of snacks are readily available. Boarders can always contact a member of staff, including at night. They are comfortable to contact the school's independent listener should they wish to do so.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant standards are met

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

34. Leaders have devised and delivered a curriculum which provides opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures. In PSHE, pupils learn about how to manage personal finances.
35. Pupils understand the need for rules both in society and within school, and they learn to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils learn about democracy and see it in practice when electing members for the school council. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about the importance of showing respect for others. Respect for others is a major part of the school's ethos and is modelled by staff.
36. Leaders have identified that the careers provision was in need of improvement. A new programme has been devised and introduced this term. This programme is comprehensive and offers support and guidance to all year groups. The programme considers the Gatsby benchmarks. Leaders have appointed staff to co-ordinate the programme and to give individual advice to pupils. Other staff are being trained so that they can also support pupils' career deliberations during tutor periods. This programme is not yet fully established, but pupils are beginning to see the benefit of it.
37. Pupils show tolerance and understanding of others. They speak about their appreciation of the world at large and social cohesion within the school. Pupils comment that living alongside pupils from all over the world within the boarding houses supports their knowledge and appreciation of different cultures. Leaders promote a greater understanding of and respect for people and promote events such as Pride Week.
38. Pupils make valuable contributions to society. Within school, they contribute as prefects and team captains and within the Combined Cadet Force. The pupil council consists of representatives who are elected to the role, and this provides them with opportunities for service. Pupils support a range of local, national and international charities, and raise money for these via a range of activities. The rugby team recently ran the equivalent distance from the school to Kiev to raise money for children in Ukraine.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant standards are met

Safeguarding

39. Leaders have established a culture of vigilance which promotes the safeguarding and welfare of pupils. Staff including those in the boarding houses are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. When concerns arise, external agencies are consulted in a timely manner, and leaders work effectively with them, and when appropriate work with the police and the local authority designated officer. Systems to record and share any concerns raised by staff are managed appropriately.
40. The school's written child protection policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and sets out suitable procedures for protecting pupils from harm. Appropriate measures are taken to manage risk. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training when they join the school, and this is updated regularly so that they are kept informed of the latest guidance. Safer recruitment checks are carried out on staff, volunteers and governors. All records of appointments are appropriately and accurately kept.
41. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures, including a scrutiny of staff recruitment records and an annual review of safeguarding practice and policies. Leaders, including those within boarding, have a thorough understanding of their role in supporting pupils who are in their care. Pupils say they feel safe at school, know how to stay safe online and have numerous trusted adults they can turn to if they have any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant standards are met

School details

School	Mount St Mary's College
Department for Education number	830/6014
Registered charity number	1117998
Address	Mount St Mary's College, College Road, Spinkhill S21 3YL
Website	www.msmcollege.com
Proprietor	Mount St Mary's Ltd
Chair	Mr Shaun Whyman
Headmaster	Mr Daniel Wright
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	364
Number of boarding pupils	61
Date of previous inspection	27 to 28 November 2019

Information about the school

42. Mount St Mary's College is an independent Jesuit co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 11 and 19 years. It is owned and governed by The Mount Trust, which also governs the separately inspected preparatory school, Barlborough Hall School. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster was appointed in September 2021. The deputy chair of governors assumed the role of interim chair in July 2023.
43. Boarders are accommodated in two houses on the school site, one for male pupils and one for female pupils.
44. The school has identified 96 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 79 of whom receive additional support. Eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
45. English is an additional language for 52 pupils.
46. The school states that its aims are to produce people of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment who will (in the words of St Ignatius) act as leaders in the improvement in living and learning for the greater glory of God. It seeks to develop the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, creative and physical formation of each pupil and to provide challenge, encouragement and support so that pupils reach their fullest individual potential.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 10 to 12 October 2019

47. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
48. Inspectors:
- observed lessons, held discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work
 - held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors
 - observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities, form meetings and assemblies
 - visited boarding houses, and the learning support and educational resource areas
 - examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.
49. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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