



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**ST. MARY'S COLLEGE (CROSBY)**

**MARCH 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>College</b>	St. Mary's College (Crosby)			
<b>DfE Number</b>	343/6128			
<b>EYFS Number</b>	EY485502			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1110311			
<b>Address</b>	Everest Road Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 5TW			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 924 3926			
<b>Email address</b>	office@stmarys.lpool.sch.uk			
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Michael Kennedy			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Sheila Ward			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	689			
	<b>Boys</b>	371	<b>Girls</b>	318
	<b>EYFS</b>	199	<b>Prep</b>	118
	<b>Seniors</b>	293	<b>Sixth Form</b>	79
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 to 30 March 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.

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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support 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

Mr Richard Mannix	Reporting inspector
Mrs Julie Lowe	Assistant reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Buttery	Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Edmund Hester	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Dr Gerard Silverlock	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Ms Val Holloway	Team inspector for EYFS (Head of nursery and kindergarten, IAPS school)
Miss Victoria Plenderleith	Team Inspector for EYFS (Former head of pre-prep, IAPS school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 St. Mary's College is an independent, Catholic day school for boys and girls aged 2 to 18 years. It is a charitable trust administered by a lay board of trustees and is governed by a fourteen-member governing body. The school was founded in 1919 by the Irish Congregation of Christian Brothers and became fully co-educational in 1989.
- 1.2 The school's main Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, called 'Bright Sparks', is situated adjacent to the senior school. The reception year, for pupils aged 4 to 5 years, is situated in the preparatory school. The preparatory school caters for pupils aged 4 to 11 and is situated about one mile from the senior school. The senior school, with its integrated sixth form, caters for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. The college has its own games fields about one mile from the senior school site.

### What the school seeks to do.

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a Catholic Christian school community in which boys and girls of all faiths and of no faith feel welcome, safe, recognized and known by name. It seeks to promote academic excellence and the fulfilment of potential within a community of faith.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised test data used by the school indicates that the ability profile of the pupils is above average in the preparatory school and the senior school, and broadly average in the sixth form. The school has identified 71 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 20 of whom receive additional specialist support with dyslexia and other conditions. No pupil has an educational, health care plan (EHC) or a statement of special educational needs. There are eight pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), one of whom receives additional support in English. Data used by the school identifies a number of pupils as being most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

### Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in May 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
  - to continue to develop the tracking of pupils' progress and monitor it more closely in order to strengthen pupils' future achievements.
  - to review the format of written reports to incorporate more structured and informative guidance for pupils.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate EYFS inspection in May 2014 were:
  - to ensure that self-evaluation processes are established for reception and that actions arising are closely monitored.

- to improve information given to parents on how the EYFS is being taught and assessed across the age range in both schools.
- to share the most effective practice in adult-child interaction to ensure that all staff provide more opportunities for the development of spoken language and independent learning.

1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils of all ages achieve very well.
- Pupils show outstandingly positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils show excellent extra-curricular participation and often achieve at a very high level, particularly in performing arts and a wide variety of sports.
- The marking and assessment of work across all departments in the senior school did not always match the standards of the very best departments in ensuring the pupils' excellent rate of progress.

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

- Pupils are unfailingly kind, caring, courteous and respectful to others.
- Pupil behaviour is excellent and they show substantial respect and kindness towards one another.
- Pupils have a very well developed sense of self-belief and self-confidence whilst showing great humility and empathy towards others.
- Pupils show a strong awareness of the needs of others outside their own community and show considerable tolerance and understanding of those from different backgrounds and traditions.

### **Recommendation**

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

- Ensure that the marking and assessment of work throughout the school is used to consistently increase pupils' rates of progress.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 St. Mary's college pupils achieve highly in accordance with the school's aim to promote academic excellence and fulfil pupils' potential within the context of a community of Christian faith. Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, understanding, and skills in relation to their abilities, and demonstrate excellent performance and creativity in their extra-curricular activities. The teaching is well planned and sensitive to individual pupil's needs and abilities, and very much supports the pupils' learning. Almost all the pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire agree that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make progress. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said they very much appreciated their teachers' willingness to give them extra help and support, and a very large majority of the pupils in the questionnaire agree that the teachers are supportive and helpful.
- 3.3 Pupils show exceptional attitudes towards their learning with a very strong work ethic and this is very effectively instilled in the pupils from an early age. They show a desire to enquire, to be independent in their learning and respond enthusiastically to opportunities for creativity, and when challenged in their thinking. From an early age the pupils are keen to work collaboratively, and they greatly enjoy working together to enhance the development of their knowledge and understanding. Pupil-initiated learning is very evident from an early age, for example with the half-termly newsletter in the preparatory school, and homework that often has a degree of flexibility, requiring a decision by the pupils as to how to undertake the task. Pupils' attitudes to learning are nurtured by knowledgeable teachers who have high expectations and use a well-organised curriculum to ensure that there are ample opportunities for collaborative pupil-initiated learning.
- 3.4 Pupils, including those in the EYFS and throughout the school, have excellent communication skills and are very active participants in lessons, where they settle well, speak with confidence and listen to their teachers with much focus and attention. Pupils show excellent skills in reading and writing, and use these skills well across the curriculum to enhance their learning. Pupils are encouraged to be creative in their writing and in music, drama and art, and they respond exceptionally well to this encouragement. They are very caring and positive in their approach to the more human, social and aesthetic aspects of education.
- 3.5 Pupils become very competent information communication technology (ICT) users from an early age, frequently undertaking research tasks and then present the information to the class through the use of posters and presentation displays. Pupils show excellent mathematical skills and they use these numeracy skills to great effect enhancing their progress across the curriculum in subjects such as science and technology.
- 3.6 Pupils hugely enjoy, and achieve very well in, a wide number of academic competitions such as mathematics challenges, the Physics Olympiad, science essay competitions and national junior science and engineering competitions. Pupils also participate fully and enjoy notable success in a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer in the school. Individual and group achievements are celebrated fully by the school as a whole, and those of all abilities feel very much included in this achievement. Pupils feel well supported, both in class and in their extra-curricular activities, and this was noted particularly in the exceptional participation and excellence in music and drama productions, as well as in the many sports undertaken. Pupils' standard of music is exceptional as a result of leaders' strong focus on promoting excellence in music. For example, all Years 4 to 7 pupils are expected to learn to play an instrument, something that was much appreciated by the pupils who spoke to the inspectors. Most pupils

move on very successfully when they leave the school, including gaining places at universities of their choice.

- 3.7 All groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the most able, and those with English as an additional language (EAL), make excellent progress and achieve very well in relation to their abilities. This progress was evident in the school's own data, lesson observations and viewing pupils' work. The school now uses a comprehensive and very effective information management system for indicating pupils' performance and progress which keeps staff very well informed as to the pupils' needs. Teachers are thus sensitive, very aware and well-informed in their approach to helping pupils with special needs. This enables the support to be very effective, with a focus on where it is needed most, including providing appropriate pace and challenge for the most able pupils. The SEND, EAL and the most able pupils are supported by a flexible curriculum and an extracurricular programme, which is adjusted to suit their individual needs. Strong leadership and management ensures that there is a well-resourced and broad curriculum on offer. The well-qualified and engaging teaching provision is very effective in ensuring the pupils enjoy their learning and that they generally make excellent progress, as seen through lesson observations, pupils' written work and the school's own assessment data.
- 3.8 In the preparatory school, results in standardised tests in the years 2016 and 2017 in maths and English, have been above the national average. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools. A-level results have been in line with the national average. The overwhelming majority of parent responses to the questionnaire indicate that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and to develop skills for the future.
- 3.9 The recently introduced and very effective framework for assessing pupils' academic standards and rates of progress ensures that the pupils generally have a very good understanding of how to improve and progress. A very large majority of the pupils in the questionnaire agreed that they know how well they are doing in their subjects, although a small minority disagreed that the marking of work helped them to improve their work. Evidence from speaking to pupils, from viewing pupils' work and the work seen in lessons, indicates that the pupils felt that the marking and assessment enabled them to make excellent progress overall, although it did not always fully support their progress in the senior school.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Throughout the school pupils are notably self-assured and self-confident in their approach to school life, whilst showing kindness, courtesy and respect for each other and other members of the school community. Pupils relish opportunities to work with one another to achieve common goals, whether in the classroom, working in groups, in extracurricular activities in teams, or the many orchestras and ensembles, and challenging drama productions. Pupils are genuine in their celebration of each other's successes and they develop high levels of self-esteem during their time at the school. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school creates an environment which successfully supports their child's personal development. The school fully meets its aim to provide the pupils with a holistic and balanced personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils are, on the most part, fully aware of how to improve their own learning and performance, and their excellent personal skills result, in part, from understanding their own strengths and areas for development. Excellent staff-pupil relationships built on trust, very much foster the pupils' confidence in taking on new challenges willingly, and not to fear the occasional failure as they progress and develop. Pupils show great resilience and perseverance in their approach to such challenges, whether in their studies or in extracurricular activities. The teachers suitably high expectations of the pupils, and their awareness of their individual needs, ensure that pupils of all abilities feel very well supported and encouraged to give of their best.
- 4.4 Pupils behave exceptionally well and show a substantial understanding of what is right and wrong. The staff encourage the pupils to view the school as their extended family where everyone is welcomed and made to feel at home. As a result, the pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance of a kind and supportive school community, and they show a deep understanding of the school rules and the importance of upholding these for the good of all. The school's Christian ethos fully supports the pupils in understanding the moral importance of abiding by rules that exist for the benefit of the whole school community.
- 4.5 Pupils throughout the school feel that there is always a trusted adult to whom they can turn, and who they would readily seek advice from, or report concerns to, if the need arises. They have a strong awareness of how to keep themselves safe physically and have an excellent age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet, as a result of the clear and regular guidance on on-line safety that pupils receive.
- 4.6 Pupils show an excellent understanding of the importance to their well-being of a healthy diet and exercise. This is because the school provides healthy nutritious food, emphasises the importance of exercise and a balanced life-style, and raises the pupils' awareness of mental health issues through the excellent personal, social, health education (PSHE) programme and use made of visiting speakers.
- 4.7 Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the lives of others in the school. They take care of each other and are very mindful of the feelings of others. Pupils thoroughly enjoy helping others less fortunate than themselves, and there is an abundance of pupil-initiated work, which includes raising funds for local and national charities. An excellent pupil-initiated support programme for Liverpool asylum seekers, which includes meeting with them and raising funds to buy tickets for a group of them to attend a music performance in the city's philharmonic hall, has been warmly embraced by the whole body of pupils. Pupils are also keen to provide direct support where needed in the locality, for example, helping in the local old people's home and in local primary schools. A number of education and personal relationship (EPR) days,

which explore various aspects of personal, social, health education (PSHE) over the course of a whole day, ensures the pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the school's PSHE programme.

- 4.8 It is a real strength of the school that the pupils show great understanding of those joining the school from different backgrounds and traditions, and they embrace them with ease into their community. Pupils strongly value diversity, and those joining the school commented that they felt very welcome and quickly saw why other pupils liken the school community to their family. From an early age, pupils develop a deep appreciation of the spiritual and non-material aspects of life, based upon a strong understanding of the Catholic faith and other faiths and cultures. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school creates an environment which successfully promotes the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.9 Pupils show a strong appreciation of fundamental British values, such as mutual respect and tolerance, and they understand the importance of democratic processes and public institutions. In discussions, pupils were aware of the dangers from those seeking to stifle healthy debate. Pupils enjoy expressing their opinions and engaging in healthy debate both inside, and out of the classroom. They are well informed on current events and are very much encouraged by the school to listen well to others and form their own opinions.
- 4.10 The excellent leadership and pastoral support provided by the school ensures that the pupils are well prepared to make mature and informed decisions regarding the next stage of their lives. From an early age, pupils are setting their own targets and making their own decisions over a great variety of aspects of school life, from their academic studies to their support for the school and other communities. Pupils are very aware that the decisions they make, including those with regard to careers, determine important aspects of their own future. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they feel the school supports them well in preparing to make these decisions.