



St Mary's
Colchester

EMPOWERING

girls

TO THRIVE

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
INSPECTION HIGHLIGHT REPORT

Australia

FEBRUARY 2026



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Empowering girls to thrive

In February 2026, St Mary's was confirmed to have met all the standards required by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

During the inspection, inspectors visited the Kindergarten, Lower School and Senior School, observing lessons, reviewing pupils' work and speaking with staff and governors. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through questionnaires, providing a broad picture of life across the school.

The report comments on the extent to which standards are met in five core areas:

- Leadership and management, and governance
- Quality of education, training and recreation
- Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Social and economic education and contribution to society
- Safeguarding

We are delighted to share some of the highlights from the report, which recognise the strengths of our school community and the positive environment we strive to create each day for our pupils.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS THE SCHOOL

Inspections offer a valuable opportunity for reflection as well as recognition of the many strengths within a school community.

The report highlighted our strong commitment to pupil wellbeing, a rich and varied curriculum and a culture of continuous improvement. Together, these ensure that our pupils are supported and empowered to thrive academically, personally and socially.

We are proud of our whole school community and grateful for the continued support of parents and staff in helping to maintain a positive, supportive and ambitious environment in which every pupil can flourish.



Key findings

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The summary of inspection findings highlighted our 'supportive environment of shared goals that promote pupils' suitably ambitious academic standards' and our 'well-planned, broad curriculum in place from early years to Year 11', which 'supports pupils' academic, personal, physical and creative development'. The summary also highlighted that 'Skilled teaching is encouraging and suitably challenging' and that 'Teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' needs as a result of thorough assessment and tracking across the school'.

EMPOWERING EDUCATION

In the summary of findings, inspectors recognised that our 'Pupils have the opportunity to take on positions of responsibility in both the lower and senior schools', how we 'teach pupils to encourage collaboration and mutual respect' and how our action 'has a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence'.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Among the key findings, inspectors noted that we 'champion a culture where everyone is treated with thoughtfulness and respect' and that 'there are plenty of ways for pupils to contribute to the school community', which 'enables pupils to grow in self-confidence and self-esteem, understanding that they are listened to and valued as individuals'.

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Leaders and governors prioritise pupils' wellbeing through their decision-making and ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Standards consistently



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leaders and managers throughout the school ensure that pupils receive a wide-ranging education which actively promotes their wellbeing so that they thrive



Leadership and management, and governance

VALUES DRIVEN SCHOOL

The inspection report highlighted that the 'school ethos encourages pupils to be ambitious, bold, compassionate, dynamic and enquiring' and that 'these values inform leaders' and governors' decisions'.

GOVERNANCE THAT SUPPORTS EXCELLENCE

The inspection found that 'Governors have the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively', that they 'oversee the school's work across all areas of school life' and that they 'ensure that leaders have the capacity, skills and knowledge for regulations to be met and for pupils to thrive.'

COMPASSIONATE CULTURE

The report recognised that leaders 'aim to create a compassionate culture where every pupil is known, supported and understood', that we 'promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) successfully' and 'that pupils throughout the school understand the importance of mutual respect for all.'

CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

The inspection report highlighted that 'Leaders are ambitious for the development of the school' and that 'They encourage a culture of continuous improvement to enhance pupil wellbeing' which 'arises from a reflective and collaborative approach to self-evaluation in all areas of school life'.

Quality of education, training and recreation

BROAD CURRICULUM

The inspection report recognised that ‘pupils benefit from a curriculum that is suitably wide-ranging and covers the required areas of learning, including academic, creative and sports subjects’ and that an ‘appropriate choice of GCSE subjects is offered, as well as enrichment lessons which focus on non-examined topics such as engineering and digital discovery.’

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMME

The report highlighted how a ‘range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils of all ages to develop and expand their interests and skills’, that we ‘encourage pupils to suggest and lead activities’ and that this ‘allows pupils to develop organisational, collaborative and time-management skills.’

PUPIL PROGRESS

The inspection noted that we have ‘introduced a robust system by which academic and pastoral leaders of learning support review pupils’ progress’ and that ‘information is used to decide appropriate actions to support individuals as necessary’ so that ‘consequently, pupils make good progress.’

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING

The inspection recognised that ‘teachers are knowledgeable in their subject specialisms’, that they ‘deliver well-planned lessons that build on pupils’ prior knowledge and attainment’, ‘encourage pupils to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills’ and ‘challenge pupils suitably to apply their learning in increasingly complex ways’.

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pupils are well motivated and keen to progress

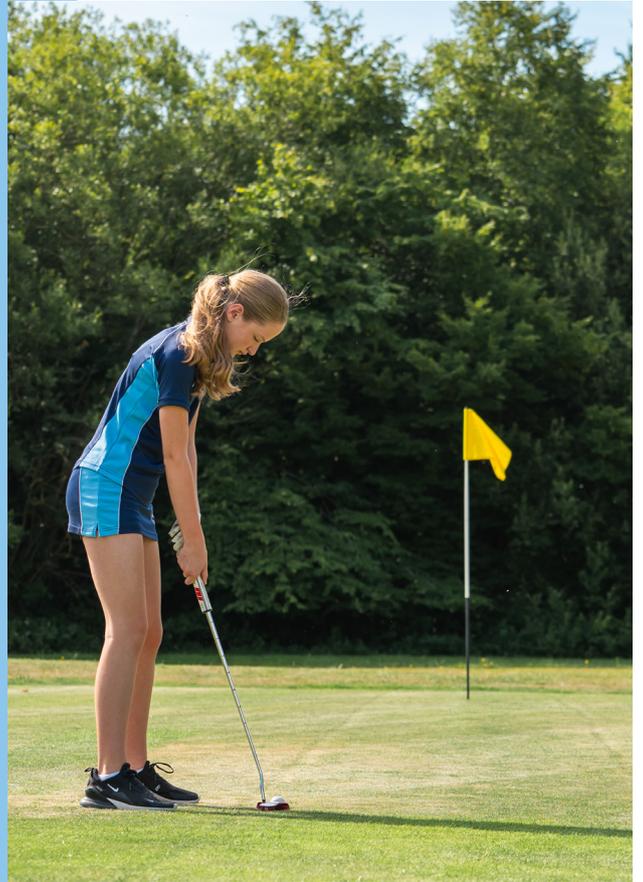
$$v = f \lambda$$

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Leaders promote the importance of considerate behaviour and model this as a matter of course



Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

SUPPORTING PUPIL WELLBEING

The inspection report highlighted that there is 'a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme in place', which is 'delivered effectively and promotes pupils' wellbeing' and that the programme 'allows pupils to develop self-knowledge as well as an understanding of the importance of mutual respect.'

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The report acknowledged that we have 'a clear behaviour policy', that we create 'an environment where expectations and consequences are clearly known' and that 'pupils actively challenge those whose behaviour is unkind.'

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The inspection found that 'pupils are effectively supervised at all times' and that 'children are secure, well cared for and effectively supported throughout the day.'

STRENGTH IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The report recognised that there is a 'variety of curricular and extra-curricular physical education (PE) options for pupils to take part in, as well as opportunities for competition against other schools', that our 'provision allows pupils to develop their physical abilities alongside communication, leadership, resilience and teamwork' and that 'pupils of all ages understand the importance of physical exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle which also promotes positive mental and emotional wellbeing.'

Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The inspection report noted that 'pupils develop a clear understanding of the rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect' and that they 'experience democracy in action when voting for pupil leadership positions.'

PROMOTING EQUALITY & RESPECT

The report highlighted how we 'teach pupils to advocate for equality, to respect diversity and to be inclusive' and that 'teaching encourages pupils to consider carefully the differences between personal views and discrimination, as well as how to promote diversity.'

CLEAR MORAL UNDERSTANDING

The inspection report emphasised how 'pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of right and wrong', how 'staff model these requirements consistently' and that 'pupils throughout the school are respectful of the rules in place'.

DEVELOPING CONFIDENT YOUNG LEADERS

The report acknowledged that we 'provide pupils with opportunities to develop their self-confidence through a wide variety of leadership roles for all ages', that pupils 'learn to argue persuasively and see change for the better arising from their suggestions' and that 'consequently, pupils grow in self-confidence whilst developing new personal and inter-personal skills'.

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Pupils know that their opinions are valued



United States



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Leaders have created a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school.



Safeguarding

SAFE AND SUPPORTED PUPILS

The inspection report highlighted that ‘pupils are well educated in how to keep themselves safe’, that ‘pupils of all ages know who to go to if they are concerned for their own or others’ safety’ and that ‘pupils feel secure and are confident that any concerns they have will be taken seriously’.

KEEPING PUPILS SAFE ONLINE

The report recognised that we have ‘a robust internet filtering and monitoring system’, ‘provide families with advice on use of parental controls as required’ and that the ‘well-designed PSHE course includes specific online safety units and is supplemented by outside providers where appropriate’.

A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING

The inspection report acknowledged that ‘Safeguarding procedures are understood well by leaders, staff and governors so that statutory safeguarding guidance is implemented effectively throughout the school’, that we ‘ensure that all staff and governors receive comprehensive, effective training when they join the school and a ‘clear commitment to protecting and supporting pupils is firmly established in daily practice.’

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This report reflects the strength of our school community and the high quality of care, education and opportunity we strive to provide for every pupil at St Mary’s.

MRS NICOLA GRIFFITHS, ST MARY’S PRINCIPAL



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