

St Martins School



Our children are individuals respected for their differences and celebrated for their strengths

St Martins is Shropshire's first 'all through' school. It is based in the small ex-mining village of St Martins, an area with rural deprivation, low paid and low skill jobs and low aspiration. 2017 marked the start of a regeneration, with the construction of new housing estates, an expansion of service industries and a new and improving through school at the heart of its community.

REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Sue Lovecy
- » Age 3-16 through school
- » Location: Rural Shropshire
- » 506 students including nursery
- » 32 teachers and 14 teaching assistants
- » Became an Academy with The Priory School Trust in September 2016

In 2013 the secondary school had fewer than 400 students and was threatened with closure. The Local Authority decided to close the village primary school and build an all through school on the site of the secondary school. This made the school financially viable and maintained secondary provision in the village.

As Assistant Head at this time I was entrusted with overseeing the new building and the design of the new through school. During the build we uncovered a hidden mural by famous artist of the 1950s Barbara Jones, which now provides a memorable backdrop to the hub of our school; an open plan library, office and work area for all students and staff.

In May 2014 I took over as Headteacher and faced a wall of challenges as the community and many of the primary staff and parents were against the merger and could not see the positives of a 3-16 education. Because I started work at St Martins, 25 years ago, as a main scale secondary Art teacher, my journey and the school's journey are woven together.

Throughness

The key to our through school success was building a cohesive family team. Governors, staff, parents and students have embraced this heart and soul. We are now delivering child-centred, individually tailored education because of our small size

“An excellent school with hard working staff who all have my children’s best interest at heart. They develop their emotional and social development, as well as their academia ”

and unique position in our community. This family ethos surrounds all who work and study here, creating a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. We value academic progress and personal development equally and all stakeholders buy into this ethos.

We have embraced our throughness and this allows us to effectively address the national issue of a dip in progress between the transition from primary to secondary school. A number of initiatives fostering through education have been developed including:

- » Whole school staff training and briefings
- » Teachers from primary and secondary working in co-coaching pairs
- » Secondary subject support for primary subjects
- » Secondary teachers delivering music, modern foreign languages, PE and computing in primary teaching planning time
- » Teaching assistants that work across the school
- » A pastoral team dealing with behaviour, safeguarding and outside agencies across the school
- » Year 6 progressing into core secondary lessons straight after SATs
- » Primary access to secondary resources and facilities.

This is just the start. We are constantly looking to develop and improve on our cross-phase initiatives.

Raising aspirations and academic standards

Getting the ethos right was relatively easy. Raising aspirations and improving the academic achievement of our students, particularly at Key Stage 4, was far more difficult. I had to go back to basics. The staff structure I inherited was top heavy. I quickly established new subject and pastoral teams, empowering them with greater responsibility and expecting far more accountability. A restructured leadership team was required to manage and support the staff through the changes.

Improving literacy across the whole school has been key to improving academic standards and the confidence of our students. We now run the Accelerated Reader programme, have ‘drop everything and read’ time and focus on literacy across all curriculum areas with literacy boxes in all classrooms. Some of the secondary students join us with low levels of literacy and we utilise our unique all through capability using phonics experts from the primary phase to support them.

New effective systems and processes were put in place for performance management, monitoring departments and for tracking and monitoring student progress. This work has taken time and there is still much to be done in getting greater consistency across the school.

Improving teaching and learning across the school has required huge investments of time, effort and money. However, our results at Key Stage 4 in 2016 show that we are turning the corner and there is an air of excitement which permeates all areas of our school; it feels as if we are riding on a wave of change.

To continue to improve achievement across the secondary phase we are creative with our curriculum structure and teaching groups. Resources have been directed into boosting staffing in core subjects enabling maths, English and science to have smaller

‘All through’ student council





Collaboration with
Moreton Hall

groups, sometimes only seven or eight students in a bottom set. We also run one year GCSE courses where Years 10 and 11 are taught together for double the curriculum time. This allows us to continue to offer a wide and balanced curriculum. We are interested to try this more intensive learning with languages to see if an immersion approach brings better learning.

Collaboration with Moreton Hall independent girls' school

We have been fortunate to have the opportunity to form a collaborative partnership with one of the very best schools in the country. The opportunity for our students to see an exceptional independent school environment first hand is truly inspirational and raises the aspirations of all of our students who study there. Each year, our collaboration gets stronger and more varied. For example, top set Year 10 science students have one lesson a fortnight in Moreton Hall's amazing new science block. This has developed their science skills but also made them feel special, independent and valued.

We also have a unique scholarship agreement that enables several of our brightest girls to transfer in Year 11 for their post-16 studies. This has been a life-changing experience for those girls and all of them have gone on to achieve superb A-level grades and secure bright futures.

Collaboration with other primary schools

Over half of our secondary cohort join us from other primary schools so we have developed a cross phase community curriculum project to help give these students a taste of our through experience. These projects are funded completely by St Martins School and have been planned by a team of teachers from all of the feeder schools. So far our Community Curriculum has included an enterprise project where a secondary specialist works with each primary school to develop and sell a product at a joint summer fair. Other projects have included a Space project which involved trips to Jodrell Bank and a British Values art week.

Future collaboration

We are now embarking on a new collaboration in being the first school to join The Priory Academy Trust. Although the schools are in different areas they have the same core values.

We are so excited about joining The Priory Trust and I am sure that this will secure the best educational opportunities for the children of St Martins School and provide an excellent platform for further rapid progress in our journey.

Other initiatives which have raised aspirations for students are:

- » Student leadership group made up of Years 11, 10 and Year 6 pupils
- » Introduction of Duke of Edinburgh award
- » Introduction of Sports leaders and Arts leaders
- » Arts awards for all
- » The revision café, making revision popular
- » BBC news report – Year 9 students take part in this exciting annual project. Led by an inspirational English teacher they report on school issues and wider world issues
- » St Martins news team
- » Trips to universities including a Cambridge residential

“Teachers report that the culture has changed, that they are more aspirational for their pupils and for themselves”

Ofsted 2016

