



St. Mary's Preparatory School  
A love of learning for life

P R O S P E C T U S





St. Mary's is the  
perfect environment  
in which children can  
grow, learn and  
be different.

*Parent*



## Welcome

**At St. Mary's Preparatory School we are committed to equipping today's children for a world full of possibilities.**

At a time when technological advancements are moving too quickly for us to predict the future for our children, St. Mary's inspirational and caring teachers focus on building self-belief, resilience, team work, tolerance and respect, alongside academic excellence. We are committed to ensuring that children achieve not only with the grades they need to thrive, but also the skills they will need to meet the challenges of tomorrow's world.

One of our core principles is to instil a love of learning in all our pupils and I believe introducing subject specialists to the children from their days in Nursery plays a significant part in helping us succeed in this vision.

We value individuals at St. Mary's and encourage children to think for themselves – and to think big. In our nurturing and inclusive environment children develop their talents, whether academic, creative or sporting and we delight in seeing them go further than they ever imagined possible.

I invite you to come and visit St. Mary's, in the heart of Henley on Thames and see how we are preparing children to embrace their futures. Our door is always open.

**Rob Harmer**  
Headmaster





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Thank you for taking our children on so many trips. I don't think the fun they had this year can be matched by any other reception class in the UK!

*Parent*

Friendly, calm atmosphere, happy children.

*Parent*

Teachers are first class.

*Parent*



When my daughter first joined St. Mary's Nursery she spoke around 20 words. Within weeks this was up to hundreds! The staff are wonderful, caring and fun.

*Parent*

The activities exceed our expectations. I highly recommend St. Mary's Nursery.

*Parent*



In the Early Years the educational programmes are outstanding.

*SIS Inspection*

## Early Years

The formative years of a child's education in our Nursery and Kindergarten (Reception) classes are ones of excitement, exploration, investigation and discovery. This is a time when children are introduced to a world beyond the secure and familiar confines of home life.

We deliver the Early Years Curriculum with an emphasis on the children's interests and often take our learning outdoors. Music, French and Sport are taught by subject specialist teaching staff, while regular visits to our Outdoor Classroom and other trips in the local area are also planned to further enhance teaching.

Our Early Years team are proud owners of 'Millie's Mark', a special endorsement for 'Inspiring Excellence in Paediatric First Aid'. This shows that we go above and beyond the national minimum requirement (of having one person with a paediatric first aid certificate in a setting) and ensure that 100% of staff are trained.



I have a great teacher who challenges me, explains things and makes them easy to understand.

*Pupil*



I love the environment in my class.

*Pupil*



Prep for exams has been exceptional with a very considered, organised approach.

*Parent*



St. Mary's succeeds academically without resorting to being a hot house.

*Parent*

## Academic excellence

Outstanding results ensure that when the time comes to move on from St. Mary's, children are offered places at some of the most prestigious Secondary Schools in the area, including the offer of scholarships, awards and exhibitions.

Children thrive in St. Mary's nurturing environment. Our approach of offering small class sizes, outstanding teaching and individual care reaps rewards, with results from our yearly progress tests consistently exceeding the national average in all subjects.

In Year 1 and Year 2 children study the core curriculum subjects with their form teacher and have specialist learning for P.E, Music, Drama and French. From Year 3 onwards our pupils are taught by specialist teachers for all of their lessons. This not only gives them access to incredibly knowledgeable staff whose enthusiasm and passion are passed onto the children, but it also prepares them for the transition to life at Secondary School.

Bringing the curriculum to life is one of the challenges we relish and we regularly take children on excursions, as well as running collapsed curriculum days across the school to help our pupils engage more deeply with a particular topic.

Expectations are high and we recognise that 'More Able or Talented' (MAT) pupils need to be challenged, stretched and inspired to achieve their full potential, just as a child who is struggling in a particular subject, or those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) may require additional support to reach their's.

We ultimately are seeking to ignite all children's interests and capture their imagination. We constantly promote high attainment, depth in learning and ensure we monitor progress closely.



Excellent academic results and a relaxed ethos – not natural bedfellows, but it seems to work here! [www.muddystilletos.co.uk](http://www.muddystilletos.co.uk) review St. Mary's....  
<https://bucksoxon.muddystilletos.co.uk/kids/school-reviews/st-marys-prep/>

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# Character development

## Drama and Music

Drama and music play an important role at St. Mary's. Children from Nursery all the way through to Year 6 benefit from weekly lessons which help to build confidence and ability.

Children who are inspired to learn an instrument can do so during the school day with assistance from one of many peripatetic teachers.

We celebrate our acting and musical talent through regular plays and music concerts and as children progress through the school they take on larger roles in school productions, giving them the opportunity to shine brightly.

Drama lessons are about much more than stage shows, however we have seen St. Mary's pupils go on to perform in West End and Broadway shows!

The school has a wonderful ethos.

*Parent*

I have never seen such a happy troop of children.

*Parent*





# Sport

Sport teaches team work, dedication and fairness – all essential to life both on and off the sports pitch. The P.E department at St. Mary's is committed to helping children find a sport they enjoy. Former pupils have gone onto to secure their black belts in Taekwondo and even row for Great Britain.

We have excellent sports facilities on and off site, including sports grounds and swimming pools. Pupils in Year 3 through to Year 6 have the opportunity to compete in sports matches against other independent schools on a weekly basis, developing their sporting abilities and team skills.



Great sport provision.  
It is wonderful that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

*Parent*



# Residential trips

Educational visits are a very important part of life at St. Mary's and greatly add to the children's enjoyment of the school. The curriculum is enhanced through first hand learning experiences with the children becoming aware of the world around them, allowing them to gain independence to prepare them for their transition to Secondary School. In addition to daily trips out, our residential trip programmes begin from Year 3.



100% happy children.  
Great teaching.  
Super helpful staff.

*Parent*



# Pastoral care

The wellbeing of each and every pupil is of paramount importance to us, and we work hard to create an environment where every child feels safe, respected and valued. There is a strong family feel to the school which is promoted by regular assemblies, house activities and staff who really care about the children they teach.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) make good progress in the school. Our Head of Pastoral care and Mental Health First Aid Champion has oversight of all the needs of the children within school and welcomes visits from children (and parents) at any time to discuss what is troubling them and to help prevent any small concerns growing.

To support our pupils who may have longer term difficulties emotionally or have issues at home we facilitate support from Primary Playspace and Parenting Pathways who support children on a one to one basis in school or work with parents to enable them to support their children. We can also refer to other agencies if required.

Pastoral care  
is second  
to none.



Fantastic staff  
and first rate  
teaching.  
We love it!

*Parent*

The teachers  
always go  
above and  
beyond to help.

*Parent*

The children feel  
safe and secure  
and are happy.

*SIS Inspection*



## A global perspective

As a Cognita school we offer a uniquely global education and encourage children to develop positive international perspectives. Our global family of schools provide us with a platform for continual exchange of ideas and inspiration, creating a vibrant culture of limitless possibility for pupils and staff alike.

We connect with pupils across the globe in joint projects that enrich learning and understanding of the wider world.

For further information please visit [www.cognita.com](http://www.cognita.com)





# Outside school hours

St. Mary's offers a varied, challenging and fun range of extra-curricular activities and experiences to enable the children to learn, achieve and enjoy themselves. Each term children can select from a huge variety of options including sporting, musical and creative activities. There is something for everybody. Clubs run before and after school enabling parents to extend their child's day if necessary.

In addition to clubs, we also run a daily 'Tea Club' which offers a safe, relaxed environment for children after the busy school day. Tea Club runs each day from 3.30pm-5.30pm and parents can book children into this in advance, or call up on the day.

At Tea Club children are provided with a healthy snack and under supervision have time to complete homework, read books, play games, do arts and crafts or work on the computer. Tea Club offers children a chance to start to unwind after the busy school day.



# Next schools

Choosing your next school is very important and we are proud of the solid foundation we give our pupils before they progress to new Secondary Schools.

At St. Mary's children complete Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) to establish their suitability for a particular school. Teachers support children in their preparation for 11+ and independent school exams during lesson time and in exam clubs. The Headmaster also meets with parents individually to discuss the options available.

We have strong links with the local Secondary Schools to allow a very smooth transition and we have an outstanding record of academic success with our children gaining their first choice at selective independent senior schools.

'In the good ground of St Mary's School  
you can grow in all kinds of ways:  
in knowledge, in imagination,  
in your understanding of yourself and of others  
and the world around you.  
It is a place where  
friendships and dreams and ambitions  
can take shape and grow...'

*Nick Butterworth*

Author and Illustrator



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St. Mary's is  
quite a unique  
environment  
where childhood is  
precious.

*Parent*





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