



St. Mary's School and College



Providing specialist educational therapy and residential care for pupils and students with speech language and communication needs.

Welcome to St. Mary's Special School and College



Foreword: Natalie Edwards, Principal

St Mary's provides a fantastic opportunity for residential and day pupils/students. I am incredibly proud of our day and residential provision at St Mary's. St Mary's is a School and College where each pupil and student is supported and encouraged to reach their potential- everyone involved in the school is ambitious for all of our pupils and students.

Specialist support for speech, language and communication difficulties and associated complex needs

We are a non-maintained special school based on the south coast of England in Bexhill, East Sussex and we cater for both residential and day pupils/students aged 5 to 19. Since 1922, it has been our mission to ensure that children with Speech, Language and Communication needs and other additional difficulties receive the integrated support they need to enable them to achieve their potential and take their place in the community. Many of our pupils/students have autism, Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) and a range of additional needs.

A total communication environment

St Mary's is a total communication environment. This means we utilise a range of approaches that enable our pupils/students to succeed in their development of their communication skills. All of our staff, including those in non-child facing roles, are trained in Sign-Supported English. Our signing team provide assistance for parents and carers who wish to learn to sign in order that they can support their child at home. In addition, we value and proactively invest in communication and learning technologies.

A personalised plan for each child

In addition to supporting Speech, Language and Communication needs the school and college offers a personalised plan for each child to access a broad and balanced curriculum fully integrated with speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, social, emotional and mental health support and opportunities to develop independence and life skills. Our facilities offer excellent opportunities to support individual needs and include a swimming pool, library, sports hall, Food Tech, Science, DT and IT rooms, Vocational Centre, physiotherapy and sensory integration facilities and therapy support rooms.

Supporting Independence

At St Mary's, we promote working towards independence in every aspect of our provision. This means our school pupils and college students are well supported to become as independent as possible in their learning and personal development.

Our Vocational Centre provides opportunities for our college students to develop employability skills and experiences. It offers a range of work-related learning opportunities such as a cafe, design and printing facilities and hairdressers, through which our college students build on their work and life skills whilst gaining relevant qualifications.

Residential facilities

Our on-site residential houses offer a 'homely' and supportive environment for pupils/students to live and learn for up to 38 weeks a year. There is an emphasis on providing a warm, welcoming and safe residential experience at the school and pupils/students are given every opportunity to do things for themselves wherever possible.

Parent and carer partnership

We pride ourselves on working closely with parents and carers. You will see, by reading the many parent/carers and pupil stories in this prospectus, that you and your child are very important to us. We champion the link between school and family and work very hard to involve you in your child's education here at St Mary's.

Get in touch

The best way to understand what we can offer is to come and meet us and experience St Mary's for yourself. We are always pleased to arrange visits for prospective pupils/students and their families. To make an appointment or to simply ask us a question, please call the school office on Tel: 01424 730740; email: admin@stmarysbexhill.org



Acting CEO, Richard Preece, says...

Welcome to our wonderful school and college. St Mary's has a unique position in the world of special education and we are proud of the work that we are doing to support and challenge our pupils and students to be the best that they can be.

Understanding

We understand the needs of our pupils and the difficulties and challenges they face. We also understand the difficulties many parents and carers will have encountered in order to secure special school provision for their child.



We know that a special school is not where some parents/carers want to be placed for the duration of their school career. Whatever the circumstances, we will always do our best to support and reassure the families with whom we work. We are always ambitious for our pupils and students to become as independent, resilient and successful as possible in all aspects of their learning and social and personal development.

Improving Standards

St Mary's is on a path of improvement and we are confident that we can make excellent provision for all of our learners. We are working closely in partnership with nearby Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust (a successful SEND multi academy trust) where I am the Executive Headteacher and



CEO, so that St Mary's develops its unique provision further. We are all ambitious for our school and college and we aim to provide consistently high quality education, therapy and residential provision for all our pupils.

Next Steps

Finally, we aim to raise aspirations for pupils and students, enabling them to be confident in their next steps in education and in their preparation for adulthood. We genuinely go the extra mile to support successful transitions and ensure that our pupils and students are exceptionally well prepared for adulthood.

Welcome to St Mary's School and College.

The Talking Trust

The Talking Trust is the Charitable Trust that is the responsible body for St Mary's School and College. The Trustees bring a wealth of experience to the Trust and, supported by the Acting CEO they oversee the operation of the School and College. The School and College makes provision for pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities, including speech, language and communication difficulties, autism and complex learning difficulties. The school and college can cater for well over 100 pupils and students aged 5-19. Although St Mary's works closely with nearby Torfield and Saxon Mount Schools, it is a separate organisation, with a long and distinctive history and has its own distinctive provision, ethos and values.

School day



Settling in

The school day starts at 8:45am. There are breaks during the day and our school day ends at 4pm (2:30pm on Fridays).

Transport

The Local Authority may provide transport between your home and school and the Transport Department will make the necessary arrangements. To ensure the safety of our pupils/students, escorts will travel on all minibuses and in some single taxis. It is the responsibility of parent and carers to ensure that their child travels safely and behaves appropriately on the transport. For residential pupils and students, transport will be discussed with parents and carers.

Uniform

School pupils at St Mary's are required to wear a uniform, which consists of a grey sweatshirt or cardigan bearing the school logo, plus a green polo shirt with the logo and dark grey trousers or skirts or culottes. Pupils must wear black shoes. Green and white checked summer dresses and shorts are optional.

School meals

Children can choose to have a nutritious hot or cold school meal. We are committed to healthy eating and our menus are regularly emailed to parents and carers. All residential pupils/students receive school meals, which are included in the price. Day pupils are charged separately for this. This school does not use nuts in school meals.



Oscar is learning valuable life skills and his self esteem has been boosted in the friendly environment of St Mary's School and College

Steve and Emma Gray live in Essex with their three sons, Elliott, aged 15, Oscar, aged 14, and Stanley, aged nine. Oscar has been a boarder at St Mary's School for two and a half years.

Fulfilling potential

Steve and Emma are delighted that staff at St Mary's are encouraging Oscar to finally fulfil his potential. "He loves life as a residential pupil, he is making good progress and is being given lots of opportunities to try new things, to help him become the best he can be," Steve says.

Useful recommendation

Oscar had attended a special school since the age of five but it became increasingly obvious the school wasn't meeting all of his needs. Emma says: "We have never been given a definitive diagnosis for Oscar's communications difficulties but we have monitored the situation over the years. When Oscar had a speech and language assessment at the age of ten, it was suggested St Mary's would be a good school for him because being a total communication environment with integrated therapies and SSE signing meant Oscar would be given speech therapy and taught signing in an environment where the children and adults can all communicate with each other.

Nothing else compares

"After we had been to see St Mary's we knew it was the right environment for Oscar. We looked at similar schools nearer to where we live, but there was nothing that compared to St Mary's. We had seen that the teachers clearly understood the children in their care and we knew it was where Oscar had to go. We felt so strongly we were prepared to fight to get him there. It was well worth the battle as Oscar hasn't looked back since starting. He has thrived and is now the Oscar we remember when he was younger, who was happy, sociable and continues to be

motivated to learn.

Amazing progress

"When Oscar first started we eased him in gradually, with two nights a week as a boarder and by the end of term he was doing a full week. Oscar has progressed amazingly and is now much more vocal and uses a number of words, which can be understood. His signing skills have advanced significantly and he also uses gestures to help him communicate.

Skilled and passionate staff

"We live a long way from the school so we can't just pop in and ask questions, but all the staff are really good at communicating with us with phone calls and emails. When we read Oscar's reports it is obvious the staff really know and understand him. What they write about him mirrors how we feel about him. They know when he is capable of achieving more and how to bring the best out of him. They are patient and give him the time to communicate. All the teachers and therapists are specialists who are highly skilled and passionate about what they do. Oscar is making progress in small steps, but each achievement is massive for us."

Confidence building

Steve says: "We get very good feedback from the staff about Oscar. They say he is attentive and focused in class and copes well in the school environment. It is a total communication school and they use a range of approaches to help the children develop their skills. The staff are really dedicated and can all sign. When Oscar was at his previous school he became insular as he was not

understood, so it is lovely to see him happier and more confident now."

Becoming independent

Emma says: "Oscar has got used to being at school during the week and at home at the weekends. He loves doing things with his brothers and immerses himself into family life. You can tell he is used to looking after himself at school because he transfers his independence skills to the home setting and likes helping others. He is much more vocal now and you can tell his self esteem has been boosted.

Above and beyond

"He likes going back to school each week to see his friends and play football and he has a wonderful key worker who goes above and beyond to help him, taking him out shopping and on trips. St Mary's are not just giving him an education they are helping him become independent and learn valuable life skills. I think Oscar would say he likes going to school because of his friends, his teachers and the chance to try new things," Emma says.

A bright future

"In just two years the staff have gained Oscar's trust, made him more confident and helped him move forward. He has made some lovely friendships with other children because they all understand each other. St Mary's have given us back our Oscar and we feel the future is bright for him."

Curriculum: creative, flexible and engaging

School Structure

The School at St Mary's is for pupils in Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 and the College is for those in Key Stage 5. At St Mary's our pupils/students follow the National Curriculum but it is differentiated according to the individual needs of each child.

Broadening horizons and opportunities

We support pupils/students' personal social and moral learning and development through our curriculum opportunities. This helps all of our pupils/students to develop their sense of self and their wellbeing, as well as to broaden their horizons and opportunities. Fundamentally, there is an emphasis on developing communication, literacy and mathematical skills in a functional way as well as to enable pupils and students to achieve formal accreditation. Developing our pupils/students' social pupils'/students' communication and social skills enables communication skills enables them to learn how to make and sustain friendships and form positive relationships. This is central to our work at St Mary's.



Key Stage 2

Key Stage 2 is delivered through a recognisable junior school approach, meaning that there is a small consistent team within each class and that core learning is delivered within a KS2 classroom to avoid transitions and unnecessary movement around the school. We make use of the School's specialist areas such as Art, Food Technology and Computing in order to support teaching and learning. We are able to offer flexibility in supporting children's development of learning and communication. Our aim is to ensure that as pupils leave KS2 they have the independence, communication and learning skills to fully access the secondary curriculum as they move onwards through the school.

Key Stage 3

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is delivered through a mixed junior and secondary style approach. Although a number of lessons are offered within their own classroom, pupils move with their class and their Teaching Assistants to Specialist Teachers who deliver the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to take greater ownership of their own learning and they are supported to develop the organisational skills and flexibility which they need to be able to be independent young adults.

We offer a core curriculum (the subjects pupils have to take) plus a range of optional subjects at St Mary's School.

Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4 students follow accredited courses, including GCSEs and BTECs, which meet their ability levels and are matched to their future aspirations. Pupils build on their prior experiences at KS3 and continue to consider what future employment and leisure activities they might wish to explore or follow in adult life, so that they can develop the skills they need to pursue these ambitions. Pupils in Key Stage 4 experience a working environment either through using our Vocational Centre or in real life work place experiences and learn about employability when exploring work related learning.

Key Stage 5 (College, ages 16-19)

Our College is in a separate, modern building on our main site. College students are increasingly independent and confident. All children in College are referred to as 'students', rather than 'pupils'. Students have the opportunity to choose subjects they wish to study for GCSEs. Students will leave us with a range of BTEC, Entry Level and Level 1 and 2 awards, as well as GCSEs. An important part of our curriculum in Key Stage 5 is developing work skills through the Vocational Centre. This leads to work experience opportunities in Years 13 and 14.



St Mary's College

In our 6th Form College, students become increasingly independent and confident whilst continuing to develop communication, literacy and maths skills. We use a combination of our Vocational Centre, school facilities (such as the school kitchens) and offsite work experience placements to support our students develop employment skills. We also attend local events and wherever possible we aim to offer all students work experience opportunities in Year 12 and 13. We are also hoping to introduce supported internships or additional work experience placements in Year 14.

St Mary's Vocational Centre

The Vocational Centre offers our students a flexible learning facility that can provide work related learning experiences and enables some students to follow vocational aspects of their accreditation routes while on the college site. The centre has a range of spaces that can support formal learning and work-based activities. For example, there is a café facility that can be opened to the public or invited guests for events, a working car washing facility and a print workshop. Other activities available include a hairdressing salon, shop and a vocational centre reception area.



Trips

To enrich the curriculum, we take pupils/students on a wide range of educational, academic and cultural visits linked to their current topics. The pupils/students at St Mary's gain a huge amount from these high quality visits to:

- Historical buildings.
- Places of cultural significance.
- Zoos.
- Museums.
- Fire stations.
- Police stations and other places where public services are provided to the community.
- And many more...

Residential pupils/students often take part in offsite activities during the evenings and weekends.

Transitions

We recognise that any transitions, including starting a new school, a new key stage, a new class can often be very challenging for our pupils/students and sometimes also for their families. By listening to you and your child together, we are able to provide the support needed to move to the next stage of their lives. We plan transitions carefully so that our pupils/students are as well-equipped and supported as possible for their next steps in education, training, employment, independence or onward placement. Transitions are planned on an individual basis to support each pupil/student and their family.



The Residential Experience

Residential Provision

St Mary's has excellent residential facilities. Students/pupils live in a stimulating but calm and 'homely' environment that also promotes personal development and independence. Each living area has a sitting room, kitchen and dining area and also recreation areas. with TA. Bedrooms are spacious and individual, although arrangements to share a room can be made, where it is appropriate.

Our Residential provision supports students/pupils to become more independent across all areas of their development. Through the delivery of our personalised 'waking day' curriculum, each child's personal, social, health and emotional development is supported. Our experienced residential care team includes therapy staff who work with pupils both before and after school to support independent living skills. Staff levels are appropriately high so that individual needs can be well supported, taking account of the age/stage of development for each pupil/student.

Our staff support pupils/students to identify individual targets through a small steps programme. These targets are linked to those described in individual EHC Plans. Our staff also work prioritise close working with parents/carers, providing advice and support when required.

We can offer a range of residential opportunities from weekly boarding to 42-week boarding. There is capacity within our provision to offer extended day, overnight respite, or short stay opportunities for pupils who are placed with us as day pupils.

Students/pupils work with staff to create activity plans which enable them to enjoy, learn and to make the most of their residential experience. This includes using local facilities such as the nearby beach, parks and countryside, as well as youth clubs, horse riding and other leisure and sporting activities. Pupils/students are also provided with opportunities to utilise the living accommodation for social interaction, quiet individual time or study. Facilities within the main school and college buildings are also available for regular use during the evening.

Our aim is to maximise and support independence, personal growth and development as our pupils/students prepare for independent living and increased self-reliance in preparation for adult life. Pupils/students learn to prepare light meals, become more responsible for their self-care and increasingly plan their leisure time. Opportunities for flexibility, autonomy, privacy and participation in decision-making are important aspects of our provision and this in turn enables increased self-responsibility and self-determination as pupils/students move towards adulthood.



Saoirse is now starting to fulfil her academic potential in the total communication environment of St Mary's School and College

Patrick Hanlon and Suzanne O'Hara live in Surrey with their son, Eoin, who is 18, and daughters, Maeve, who is 15, and Saoirse, who is 13. Saoirse has been a boarder at St Mary's School for nearly two years.

Specialists in communication

Patrick and Suzanne are very pleased with the improvement in Saoirse's speech production and her progress academically since starting at St Mary's. Suzanne says: "We always knew Saoirse was a smart girl but her difficulty in language production can disguise this and hold her back. After moving to a specialist speech and language primary school her language improved. We chose St Mary's because it is one of the few specialist secondary schools for children with speech, language and communication needs and could offer a total communication environment. Since starting at St Mary's, Saoirse has made another big leap forward. After the first month there was a marked improvement in her speech production. Relatives who don't see her very often have been amazed by how much her speaking has improved."

Fulfilling potential

Although Saoirse is verbal and can understand most of what is said to her, she signs as well as speaking. Suzanne says: "St Mary's is a total communication environment and the staff also use visual clues when they are teaching. Saoirse signs as a fallback if she can't make herself understood verbally. Now communication issues aren't a barrier to her learning, she is fulfilling her potential academically and she enjoys all the subjects she is learning at the school."

Making friends

"Saoirse settled in well and loves the school. Because she has separation anxiety she is a bit upset for a few minutes after I drop her off on Monday mornings, but we

have been told that she is fine again quickly and this is apparent in how she is making friends and flourishing at St Mary's. When she's at home she tells us she misses the school and the friends she has made there.

Loving learning

"She likes English lessons and working on story telling and comprehension. She loves Maths and has made great progress with her times tables. She astounded us with her knowledge of fractions recently and her mental arithmetic has improved. She also enjoys science. They have been looking at the heart recently, which she has found fascinating."

Integrated therapy

"While some speech and language schools are ill-equipped to deal with disabilities outside of those related to communications, St Mary's has a range of therapists in house. As parents, one of the key attractions of the school was the way therapists work side by side with teachers in the classroom, as well as inputting to the life-skills teaching programme within the residential setting. Saoirse has speech and language therapy input during lessons and in a one-to-one and small group setting. Saoirse also struggles with her mobility, stability and coordination, so physiotherapists and occupational therapists work on skills with her during the school day, encouraging her to do physical activity and improve her capabilities. We have been completely satisfied with St Mary's and have found the staff very supportive."

Becoming independent

Suzanne admits the family did have reservations about Saoirse living away from home. "We are a very close family so ideally, we would have loved her to be able to go to school during the day and come home in the evenings. St Mary's is too far away for her to commute daily but in the end we agreed it is such a good school for her, she has to be a residential pupil Monday to Friday. Every child has a key worker who teaches them life skills and how to become more independent. Saoirse has learnt how to put on washing and load the dish washer. They teach them road safety and internet safety and encourage them to try different activities. Saoirse has had a go at horse riding and drumming and enjoys doing arts and crafts and karaoke. They have a supper club where they all cook together in the evenings and she goes out shopping and into the local community."

Tailored education

"Saoirse is very sociable and has made some good friends. She likes to be helpful and look after some of the more vulnerable children. She also gets on well with the older girls, who are further ahead with their education. We are pleased Saoirse is now able to access learning in an environment where there are students with similar issues. The learning is tailored to the children's individual requirements and aims to improve their confidence. We know we made the right choice because of the wonderful progress Saoirse has been making at St Mary's."

Therapy and Individual Support

Therapy, Health and Personal Development

Our onsite therapy and health professionals work in partnership with our education and residential staff to provide integrated support and intervention to the pupils and students at St Mary's. This allows us to ensure that their health and personal development is exceptionally well supported. Our therapists work throughout the school and college and within the residential houses and they also support our pupils and students in the community to facilitate learning, develop their social and emotional skills and to promote independence and build resilience. Therapists provide in-depth assessment, individual therapy programmes, small group therapy sessions, assistance in the classroom to support access to learning and also residential support. The Therapy teams work collaboratively with staff and parents and carers to develop our pupils and students skills which will support them in adulthood.

All therapists are registered with the Health Care Professional Council (HCPC)

Onsite Therapy services and facilities at St Mary's

- Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)
- Sign Supported English (SSE) trained staff
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Physiotherapy (PT)
- Educational Psychology
- School Nurse
- Music Therapy
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Physiotherapy gym
- Sensory integration suite
- Sensory Room

Speech and Language

Our onsite Speech and Language team support pupils' communication so they can achieve their potential. St Mary's School and College is specialist school for children with speech, language and communication needs. We take a Total Communication approach to enabling our pupils to communicate.

Speech and Language at St Mary's

The Speech and Language Therapy team consists of Speech and Language Therapists and Speech and language therapy assistants. All of our Speech and Language Therapists are HCPC and RCSLT registered and offer a high level of expertise in working with children and young people with communication disorders within the context of a complex range of needs. The team supports the assessment, diagnosis and management of speech, language and communication needs; social skills and pragmatic language development, and eating and drinking difficulties. The Speech and Language Therapy team is based on site and interdisciplinary working is a core part of our provision. We provide advice and work collaboratively with colleagues including teachers, residential staff, Occupational Therapists and Parents and Carers. This allows us to support and extend speech, language and social communication skills in the classroom, community, and other settings.

The Speech and Language Therapy team have a range of specialist qualifications, knowledge and experience in areas and approaches including: Autistic Spectrum Disorders; Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia; Hearing Impairment; Developmental Language Disorder (Specific Language Impairment); Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC); Talking Mats; transition; software and apps; building language through Lego; Social Stories; social language use; Dysfluency; and Dysphagia.

We also have specific experience of working with pupils with Worster Drought, Di George Syndrome, Down's syndrome, Tuberous sclerosis, Prader-Willi and Pathological Demand Avoidance.

Total Communication

St Mary's advocates a Total Communication approach. This involves the use of a combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies to support expressive and receptive communication. A range of methods can be employed as part of a Total Communication approach, including: facial expression, gesture and pantomime; voice and speech; drawing and writing; signing (at St Mary's all staff and pupils are taught Sign Supported English); low technology aids e.g. Symbol books/PECS; high technology aids including tablets and speech apps.

Signing is used to reinforce concepts and vocabulary, and to support processing, learning and retention. For those pupils who require (AAC) systems we are able to offer specialist assessment and ongoing support. Systems used may range from personalised communication books to hi-tech voice-output technology. A wide range of resources using picture communication symbols are also used throughout the day to support communication, learning and independence.

We have created 20 Sign Language videos for you to view on our YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com>



Sophie has blossomed and become more confident in the supportive atmosphere of St Mary's School and College

Marion and Jeff live in East Sussex with their son, Jack, aged 21, and daughter, Sophie, aged 18. Sophie is a day student at St Mary's School and College.

Individual attention

As Marion and Jeff look back on Sophie's seven years at St Mary's they are amazed by what she has achieved in that time and how much staff at the school have helped her get there. Her Mum, Marion, says: "It is lovely to see Sophie more confident now and I think that is down to the ethos of the school. At St Mary's it is all about the individual child, not about everyone learning the same thing at the same time. All the children receive an educational programme that is tailored to their needs."

Good recommendation

Sophie has a speech and language disorder and moderate learning difficulties and had a traumatic time when she was at primary school because she suffers from anxiety, Marion says. "She attended a mainstream primary until she was in Year Three and then moved to a mainstream primary with a language unit. She was anxious about going to school and did not progress well. We found a speech and language tutor for her, who also worked at St Mary's. Her tutor thought the school would be a good fit for Sophie when it was time for her to move up."

Integrated therapy

"Sophie started at St Mary's when she was 11 and settled in surprisingly well, considering her previous anxiety about going to school. She benefited from the small class sizes and was also helped by the wellbeing team and their psychology input. We were quickly reassured we had got her into the right school and were pleased that the therapists were there all the time."

Speech improvement

Jeff says: "The first progress we saw was with Sophie's talking and the increase in her confidence. She has never been good at socialising with family and friends but we gradually saw an improvement. Her speech became better because she learnt to sign when she couldn't find the word she wanted. Now she doesn't need to use signs to speak but it is a useful additional tool to help her communicate."

Developing skills

"We work as a team with the school because we help her at home and the staff liaise with us about her progress. We had been trying to teach her to tie her own shoe laces for years, but after we mentioned it to the school, they had cracked it within weeks and she could tie them. We had tried to teach her to ride a bike but the school have helped her become much better at it."

Experiencing work

Marion says: "Sophie's anxiety issues had been a major barrier to her learning but we have seen real progress since she has been at St Mary's. Now she is attending the college she is learning many new things. She enjoyed hairdressing and working in the college café and she is studying IT. She sometimes works in the school kitchen because she loves cooking and she also enjoys baking at home."

Building on strengths

"Sophie gets a lot of pleasure from sport. St Mary's have a swimming pool and they taught her to swim. She has represented the school, competing against other children in her age group. She also loves running. The staff en-

courage her to do the things she is good at and she now enjoys music therapy and drumming."

Making friends

Jeff and Marion are grateful for the support they have had from St Mary's over the years. "We know we can always ring up and tell them if Sophie's worried about something and that they will deal with it. We have found all the staff to be very approachable," Jeff says. "St Mary's has been a big part of Sophie's life and she now has some good friends there."



Your child's achievements

How will I know how my child is doing?

We give our pupils/students regular feedback on their learning so that they understand what it is that they need to do better. This allows us to base our lesson plans on a detailed knowledge of each pupil and student. We also give parents and carers regular updates on their child's progress so that teachers, pupils, students, parents/carers are all working together to raise attainment and achievement for all pupils/students.

Annual Review

Parents/Carers are invited to take part in their child's Annual Review when we discuss their progress towards EHCP outcomes and set targets for the following year. Your child is always invited to take part in this meeting.

Parent evenings

We have two parent evenings each year when parents/carers have the opportunity to meet with staff and view some of their child's work.



Tait is flourishing and his talents are being encouraged by caring staff at St Mary's School and College

Richard and Reama Shearman live in Henley-on-Thames with their son, Tait, aged 15. Their daughter, Ella, aged 23 and other son, Teal, aged 21, are both at university. Tait has been a boarder at St Mary's School for the last three years.

Encouraging progress

When your child is invited to have lunch with the school Principal as a reward for good work, it is made even more special if he is allowed to choose the menu and help prepare the food. For Richard and Reama, this lovely occasion recently was just one example of how well the staff at St Mary's School understand their son. Reama says: "St Mary's have encouraged Tait to progress in subjects he is good at, such as IT and Maths. He loves to help with power point and lighting for events and enjoys cooking meals for his friends."

Great reputation

Tait was diagnosed with bilateral perisylvian polymicrogyria, a rare neurological disorder that affects his ability to communicate. He also has other health issues and can become frustrated because of his difficulties. Reama says: "Tait attended a specialist speech and language primary school and thrived there, so we wanted him to continue his education in a similar school. St Mary's was recommended by his primary school and we knew from other parents it had a great reputation. After we finally got the local authority to agree, Tait started in Year Seven. Tait's primary school had been incredibly good and we were worried about him moving up, but we have been completely satisfied with St Mary's."

Expert therapists

"Tait settled in well as he knew other children there and he felt comfortable right from the start. They teach sign language and have speech and language therapy integrated into the curriculum in the same way as his

primary school. The spacious environment and small classes suit him. The school is a community where everyone is supportive and there is no negativity. The children have a range of communication issues and the staff are experts on these.

Special atmosphere

"When we first walked in we could tell it was a nurturing environment and that it was just what Tait needed. The staff are good at coming up with plans to suit each individual child. Everyone's education is specially designed for them and the staff have worked hard to understand Tait's requirements."

Seamless working

"Tait attends hospital every six months and the hospital send a nurse once a term to visit the school to discuss how his medication is working and what his needs are. It is a seamless way of working that helps relieve our anxiety as parents. The hospital are informed about Tait's progress and the school know what's going on from a medical point of view, which I think is pretty impressive."

Preparing to be independent

"Tait gets a lot of benefit from using sign language. Although he can hear what is said to him he can't process it well and signing is a great help. He has difficulty in producing language himself, but the school have helped him embrace technology and he now finds email enables him to communicate with everyone. He enjoys his whole school day from breakfast club, where he makes breakfast with his friends, to cooking dinner for them in the evening. St Mary's is preparing him to be as independent

as possible. He also loves playing football, running and swimming in the pool at the school," Reama says.

Making good progress

"We would advise other families considering St Mary's to go and see the school for themselves. As soon as they walk in they will feel how special it is. The focus is very much on communication, inclusion and progression. Tait is being well prepared for the next phase in his education."

Children say

Tait says: "I like the staff best about St Mary's because they are kind and I like living at North Lodge because I like all the things I can do and there is a cabin and hobby room."



Admissions

The best way to find out if St Mary's is right for you and your child is to come and visit us. This way you can see for yourself pupils engaged in their learning, the facilities we have to offer and meet the people who will be working with you and your child.



Call us on 01424 730740, email our administration team at: admin@stmarysbexhill.org and once we have taken some initial details, one of our senior leaders will call you back to arrange a visit.

Our admissions process:

- Stage 1** = Initial Enquiry: Please call Administration on 01424 730 740, or email us admin@stmarysbexhill.org
- Stage 2** = A member of SLT will contact you and confirm a mutually convenient date to visit the School and College.
- Stage 3** = Informal visit. This is an opportunity for you to see what St Mary's can offer.
- Stage 4** = A Taster visit. These sessions will be bespoke to your child and may involve a day, a series of sessions or a number of day visits. Where appropriate it may include an extended day or overnight stay in our residential facility.
- Stage 5** = If we feel that we can meet your child's needs we will inform you and your Local Authority.



What can you expect on your visit?

You may decide to come as parents / carers or you may decide to bring your child, as well on an initial visit. You will be met by our SENCO and Admissions Lead, who is a senior member of staff and who will accompany you during your visit. Our Admissions Lead will help you find all the information that you need to be able to make the important decision about whether the school is right for your child. During your visit, you will have an opportunity to talk to a variety of staff and to see first-hand what we can offer.



What next?

After your visit, if it is appropriate, the Admission Lead will discuss and arrange a Taster visit for your child.

The Taster Visit / Day:

Your child will be placed in the most appropriate class and if required, a residential setting. During the day your child will follow the timetable for their identified group and attend all lessons. Their presentation will help inform everyone in their decision making. We will be making assessments and gathering information to inform our decision in relation to how appropriate a placement at St Mary's would be.

A decision based on the child's EHCP and any supporting reports as well as the Taster Day will be made by the Senior Team as to whether we feel that St Mary's can meet the needs of your child.

This decision is communicated to yourself and where appropriate, your Local Authority.

If you wish to take up a placement, your Local Authority may also need to make a decision as to whether they feel that the school is an appropriate placement. We will of course be able to discuss this process with you further during your initial visit.



Onsite Therapy services and facilities at St Mary's

- Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)
- Sign Supported English (SSE) trained staff
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Physiotherapy (PT)
- Educational Psychology
- School Nurse
- Child and Family Intervention Lead
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Physiotherapy gym
- Sensory integration suite
- Sensory Room

Admission Process

The best way to find out if St Mary's is right for you and your child is to come and offer and meet the people who will be working with you and your child.

Call us on 01424 730740, email our administration team at: admin@stmarysbexhill.org for more about your situation and to arrange a visit.

Our admissions process:

Stage 1 - Initial Enquiry: Please call Administration on 01424 730 740 or email us admin@stmarysbexhill.org

Stage 2 - Our Administration staff will contact you and confirm a mutually convenient date to visit the School and College.

Stage 3 - Informal visit. This is an opportunity for you to see what St Mary's can offer.

Stage 4 - A Taster visit. These sessions will be bespoke to your child and may involve a day, a series of sessions or a number of day visits. Where appropriate it may include an extended day or overnight stay in our residential facility.

Stage 5 - If we feel that we can meet your child's needs we will inform you and your Local Authority.

A great source of information to help answer any questions you may have about St Mary's School and college is our website: www.stmarysbexhill.org Here you will find a wealth of useful information including school policies, curriculum information, admissions information, helpful documents about the therapies we provide, our residential provision and plenty more! We do appreciate that a conversation would sometimes be the most helpful way to answer your questions. If this is the case, please do contact us on 01424 730740 or at admin@stmarysbexhill.org. We will then arrange to speak with you directly as soon as possible.

2021/22 Academic Year Term Dates

Term 1	Term 3	Term 5
1 September 2021 - 22 October 2021	4 January 2022 - 11 February 2022	19 April 2022 - 27 May 2022
Autumn term break: 25 October 2021 - 29 October 2021	February break: 14 February 2022 - 18 February 2022	May break: 30 May 2022 - 3 June 2022
Term 2	Term 4	Term 6
1 November 2021 - 17 December 2021	21 February 2022 - 1 April 2022	6 June 2022 - 22 July 2022
Christmas break: 20 December 2021 - 3 January 2022	April break: 4 April 2022 - 18 April 2022	
Staff In-Service Training Days		
Wednesday 1st, Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd September 2021		
Monday 21st February 2022		
Monday 6th June 2022		

St Mary's Vision and Values

Our Purpose

To provide outstanding integrated specialist education, therapy and residential care for pupils/students with speech, language, communication and other associated complex special educational needs and disabilities.

Our Vision and Values

At St Mary's we provide a positive environment for learning in which all children and young people can feel safe, secure and supported in their learning and development. However significant their needs are, all children and young people have the right to be fully included in their learning experiences. All children and young people should be able to make the most of opportunities to develop their potential and to prepare for life beyond school and college. All adults at St Mary's provide the highest quality support in order to maximise opportunities for learning at all times. All learning will be accessible, stimulating, motivating, challenging and enjoyable. Our values are crucial in supporting this vision:

- Promote independence and preparation for life after school.
 - Promote inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- Provide accessible, meaningful and challenging activities to promote learning and personal development.
- Promote opportunities to learn about and practice empathy, respect, kindness, trust and collaborative working.
 - Provide opportunities to develop self-esteem and self-worth.
 - Develop moral, spiritual and cultural awareness.
- Provide a caring, supportive, safe and stable learning environment.
- Work effectively as a staff team, constantly striving for improvement.
 - Celebrate achievements in all aspects of development.
- Provide pupils/students with opportunities to fulfil their potential.
 - Promote enjoyment and pride in learning and achieving.
- Clearly share our values with parents, carers and other stakeholders.
- Manage our resources effectively to ensure maximum benefit to learners.



St Mary's School & College

Wrestwood Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 2LU

Tel: 01424 730740 Email: admin@stmarysbexhill.org Web: www.stmarysbexhill.org