



St Mary's School and College, Bexhill

Residential and non-residential education, therapy and support for children aged 7-19 who have speech, language and communication difficulties and associated complex needs.

St Mary's School and College (The Talking Trust) is registered charity 307021

"Pupils thrive in an environment where they are valued as individuals and where their views and opinions matter. The safety of pupils is central to all practice."

OFSTED CARE INSPECTION 2016



Welcome to St Mary's

St Mary's School and College is a safe and supportive environment in which pupils live and learn together.

The school was established in 1922 and we became a registered charity and non-maintained special school in 1967. We have the flexibility to offer a personalised approach for each of our pupils.

"We pride ourselves on working hard with you and your child to ensure they gain the academic, independent and work skills needed for a fulfilling life after St Mary's."

St Mary's School and College is an inclusive school which provides personalised education, care and therapy for pupils aged 7-19. Our pupils have speech, language and communication needs and many also have associated physical and learning difficulties.

Our individualised programmes reflect our understanding that every child will need a programme specific to their needs which is delivered in an age appropriate way. We have a very high standard of dedicated facilities and specialist staff.

Bexhill is a beautiful location on the south coast and one that provides many learning and leisure opportunities such as: local youth clubs, golf, and trips to the beach which are both fun and enriching.

Our Vocational Centre, 'Aspire', provides amazing opportunities for young people. It has a number of 'outlets' such as a cafe and hairdressers, through which our young people build on their work and life skills whilst gaining relevant qualifications.

We are very proud of our pupils' achievements, our relationships with parents and the hard work of our staff which creates a wonderful atmosphere in which to live and learn. The best way to understand what we can offer is to come and meet us and experience St Mary's for yourself.

We hope you take the opportunity to visit soon.





What St Mary's offers

St Mary's School and College includes dedicated buildings for school and college, the Aspire Vocational Centre, Interim Assessment and Placement Centre, and separate living areas. We have modern, adapted classrooms which include adjustable desks, specialist seating, interactive whiteboards, soundfield systems, technology and appropriate software to support learning.

Specialist provision includes Food Technology, Science and Design & Technology classrooms, computing suites, a well-resourced library, specialist gym, warm water pool and outdoor sports areas.

St Mary's offers a truly integrated approach that brings together education, therapy and care. Our on-site team includes speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. We have a qualified nursing team, psychologists, wellbeing team, visiting audiologist and GP services, as well as a Child and Family Support Worker. As part of our core offer our facilities include: hydrotherapy pool, physiotherapy gym, sensory integration suite, medical, health and wellbeing services.

We have five residential houses (two of which are off-site) which are part of our programmes for extending independence skills. A dedicated care team provide support to our residential pupils.

All of our staff work together with the families and children to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils.

School

The school at St Mary's is for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. We follow the National Curriculum but differentiate it according to a child's needs.

Key Stage 2 is delivered through an integrated day approach. We have recently modernised our spacious suite of KS2 rooms to better meet the complex needs of our pupils. We are able to explore a wide variety of ways to support the 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 curriculum as they move onwards through the school.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is delivered through a secondary style approach. Pupils have a tutor class and move with this class and their teaching assistants to specialist teachers who deliver the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to take greater ownership of their own learning and develop the organisational skills and flexibility which they need to be able to be independent young adults.

At Key Stage 4 pupils begin to follow accredited courses which meet their ability levels. They begin to consider what future employment and hobbies they might wish to 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 when they go on work experience for the first time.

We believe an important part of the curriculum is to help pupils explore their creative sides and further develop their interest and abilities in sport, culture and entertainment and art. This helps them to use their free time for enjoyment and creates a sense of wellbeing.

Throughout, there is an emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills in a functional way as well as for accreditation. Developing our pupils' ability to make friends and form relationships is central to our work. Our Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) life skills programme is structured according to age and ability.

College

The college at St Mary's opened in 1999 and is housed in a vibrant building adjacent to the Aspire Vocational Centre. This gives college pupils their own age appropriate space whilst still being able to access to the full range of facilities and services available through the main school building.

In college, pupils are increasingly independent and confident. Pupils have the opportunity to choose subjects they wish to study from a broad selection. Pupils leave us with a range of ASDAN, BTEC, Entry Level and Level 1 and 2 awards. An important part of our curriculum in Key Stage 5 is developing work skills through the Aspire Vocational Centre. This leads to work experience opportunities in Year 12 and 13 after which many pupils undertake supported internships in Year 14.

In college, we continue to ensure a tailored approach to meet the pupils' individual needs. We have strong partnerships with employers and other schools and colleges who offer training and support to our pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing personal independence alongside the skills and confidence needed to be part of the wider community.



"I am proud of working at the Aspire Vocational Centre. I am learning lots of new things there."

Elizabeth, Pupil

Aspire Vocational Centre

The Aspire Vocational Centre offers a unique learning environment based around a 'Shopping Mall'. Here pupils learn their literacy and numeracy skills in a real-world context whilst developing important work ethics, business skills and knowledge.

Aspire is currently home to a hairdressing salon, a café, a pop-up shop, car wash, printers, bank and a general store.

Pupils work in each of the Aspire shops before formally applying for placement in their preferred option. In the summer term, college pupils become mentors within Aspire for pupils from Key Stage 4 as they complete their work experience.

As well as gaining invaluable workplace experience, the Aspire Vocational Centre helps pupils to develop independent living skills, self-esteem, communication skills and functional numeracy and literacy.



Supporting Speech and Language

The Speech and Language Therapy team consists of speech and language therapists and therapy assistants, signing tutors, and a Total Communication practitioner. All of our therapists are HCPC and RCSLT registered.

The team is involved in the assessment, diagnosis and management of speech language and communication needs; social skills and pragmatic language development, and eating and drinking difficulties. The nature and level of speech and language therapy provision provided to each pupil is determined through the comprehensive individual, continuous assessment of need.

The speech and language therapy team have a range of specialist qualifications, knowledge and experience in areas and approaches including: autistic spectrum disorders; verbal dyspraxia; hearing impairment; 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, and Pathological Demand Avoidance.



The ultimate aim is for every pupil to achieve as much independence as possible so that they can live a fulfilled life.

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 such as symbol books; high technology aids including tablets and speech apps.

We offer integrated support to promote the functional use of Sign Supported English, to reinforce concepts and vocabulary, and to support processing, learning and retention. For those pupils who require AAC to support, or stand in place of speech, we are able to offer specialist assessment and ongoing support.



Therapy, Health and Wellbeing

Our therapy, health and wellbeing teams and on-site facilities enable us to support pupils with a range of needs including: speech and language impairment, learning difficulties, sensory processing, physical needs, attachment disorders, and eating and drinking difficulties.

Our therapists deliver provision across the waking curriculum. Our model of integrated therapy means that the pupils' needs are planned, provided, and assessed in natural and functional settings. There is the opportunity to develop high levels of trust and familiarity leading to strong therapeutic relationships. Skills are addressed in the clusters which serve functions in the pupils' life maximising independence levels, and the development of 'tools for life'.

With child centred planning at the heart of our work we believe that through understanding what is driving a pupil's behaviours and anxieties we will be best placed to help them to be managed in an appropriate way. We work closely with families and carers, as well as the pupil to ensure we understand their personal goals and ambitions so that we can provide the support and interventions necessary to make these a reality.

The ultimate aim is for every pupil to achieve as much independence as possible so that they can live a fulfilled life.



The Residential Experience

St Mary's has several onsite and off-site houses which are grouped according to age and needs. We have created warm, caring environments for our children and young people so they feel comfortable and 'at home'. Our living areas have communal space for everyone to spend time together as well as shared or individual bedrooms and bathrooms.

We create exciting and appropriate opportunities to take part in activities in the community as well as on site. Pupils work with residential staff to create their activity plans which will enable them to enjoy and learn. Our ethos of promoting independence continues through the living areas where pupils are supported and nurtured to build on life skills and learn how to care for themselves. We can offer a range of residential opportunities from weekly boarding to 42 week boarding.

For day pupils there is the chance to join their residential friends once a week for enrichment evenings, as well as taking part in organised celebrations and activities that take place during the school day.



"I love St Mary's. I like art, spending time with my friends and going on trips with the girls from my living area."

Bea, Pupil

St Mary's follows a 'waking day curriculum' which means that throughout the day staff are clear about the goals and targets pupils are working towards and provide opportunities for them to do so. We place social and independence skills within the curriculum so that our pupils are confident in real-world situations. Importantly, this means pupils can practise their new skills in different places.

We have a number of different after school clubs and extracurricular activities that pupils can choose to take part in including exciting and stimulating evening and weekend trips and events. St Mary's takes every opportunity to celebrate key events and dates in the calendar which means that our pupils have a very rich schedule. Activities include: football, horse riding, arts and crafts, baking, tennis, uniformed groups such as Scouts and Brownies, music lessons, judo and many more. If a child has a particular interest St Mary's will do their very best to help them explore that interest.

We understand and value the opportunities we provide to pupils to take part in community activities when they are in residence but we also understand that often they enjoy spending quiet time in the house and in their own space. We pride ourselves on getting this balance right for our pupils.



In the community

Bexhill is a coastal town in the heart of 1066 country and we are proud to be a full and active member of the local community here.

Recent examples of our community activity have included:

- Our signing choir performing at concerts and events including the switching on of the town's Christmas lights
- Being part of the local Festival of the Sea and the Bexhill Carnival
- Taking part in sports events and working with local football clubs
- Working with students in other schools and colleges

St Mary's is a registered charity and holds regular fundraising and awareness events. These are very well attended by our staff, parents, pupils and the public. Fundraising at St Mary's supports the development and improvement of our site and ensures we can deliver a wide and expanding range of enrichment opportunities.



Transitions

We recognise that transitions, whether it's a new key stage, a new class or a new provision are often very difficult for pupils 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 with the confidence that they are ready and equipped. Examples of our transition support include:

- Schemes throughout St Mary's which set age appropriate challenges in each Key Stage, such as "12 Things to do in a Key Stage".
- Our curriculum and support is designed to reflect the changes from primary school, to secondary school and then to college.
- Year 11 pupils plan and enjoy a very special 'Prom' night off site.
- Transition meetings and career support helps parents and pupils to plan their destinations post St Mary's. Many of our pupils go from St Mary's to further their education elsewhere and some move into residential environments with differing levels of support.

The aim of working this way is to ensure that pupils move to the next stage of their lives ready and equipped to enjoy it and feel confident within their new setting.

Interim Placement and Assessment Centre

The Interim Placement and Assessment Centre is located in Stables house, part of the main site at St Mary's School and College. With space for eight children, the centre offers tailored therapy and support for children who require a longer period of assessment or need a slower transition to main school. We also take pupils who will be integrated into mainstream education.

Every child who uses the centre will have a very individualised pathway and intended outcomes. Pupils are residential during the week and are taught both 1:1 within the centre and in monitored sessions within the school and college. The aim is that children move on from the Interim Assessment and Placement Centre to the most appropriate setting for them. For some, that will be St Mary's whereas others will be placed elsewhere or return to mainstream education.

See for yourself

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 admin@stmarysbexhill.org or complete the enquiry form on our website and once we have taken some initial details one of our senior leaders will call you back to find out a little more about your situation and to arrange a visit.

What can you expect on your visit?

The senior member of staff who arranged your visit will greet you and ensure that your visit is designed to help you find out the information you need to be able to make this important decision. 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 senior member of staff supporting your visit will discuss and arrange for a formal assessment of your child. Assessments are typically held over three days. More information will be given to you at the time the assessment is arranged.

The assessment process:

Your child will be placed in the most appropriate class and, if required, residential setting, which can include the Interim Placement and Assessment Centre. During the visit your child will follow the timetable for their identified group and attend speech and language, occupational therapy and physiotherapy assessments.

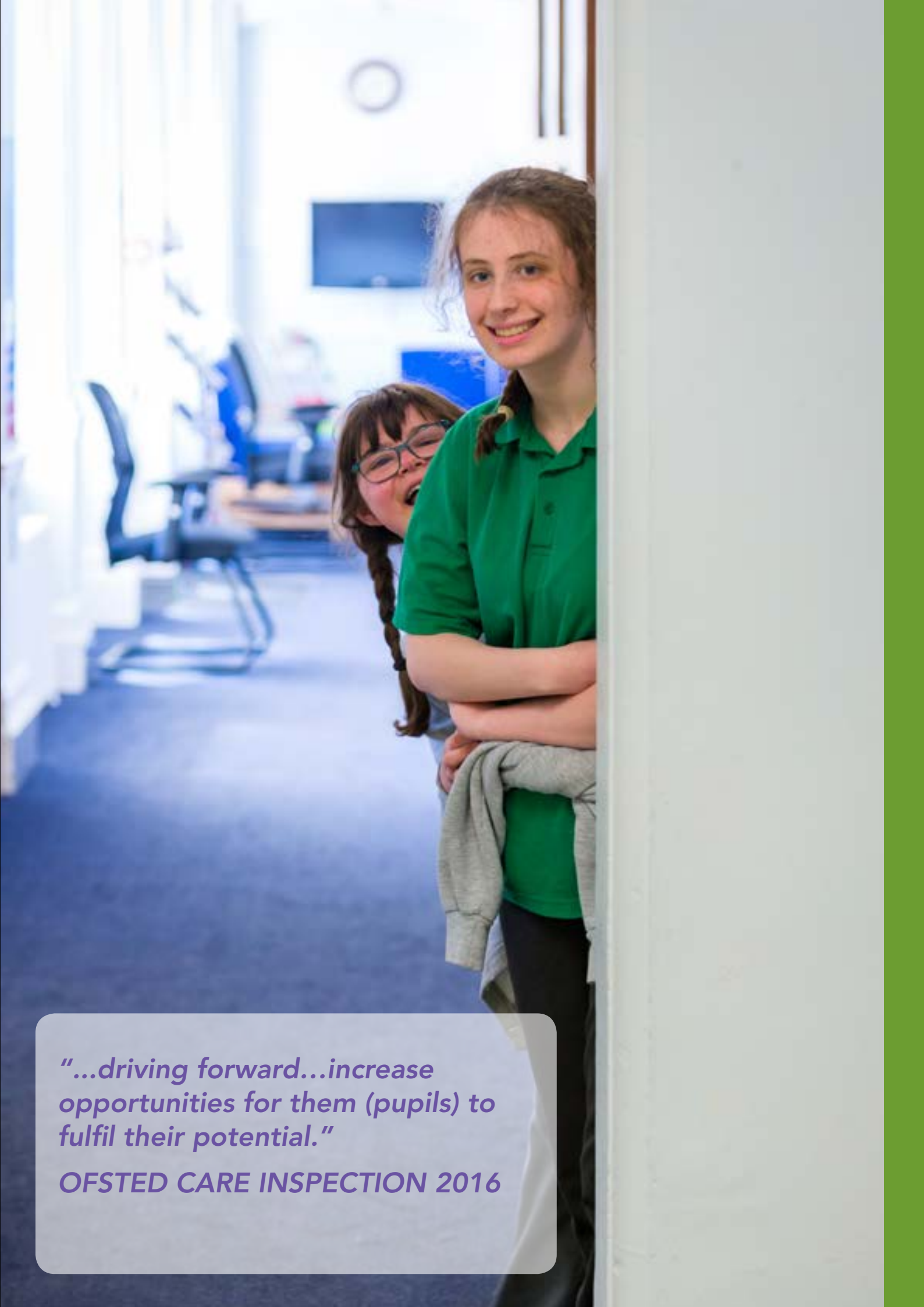
The Admissions and Assessment Teacher at St Mary's is responsible for your child during the assessment period, ensuring they are appropriately supported throughout. Our Child and Family Support Worker will ensure that we have the relevant information in advance of the assessment and keep in touch with your child's stay.

A full multidisciplinary report is provided after the assessment which details your child's performance whilst at St Mary's.

Useful information

St Mary's School and College (Registered Charity 307021)
Wrestwood Road
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN40 2LU

Telephone: 01424 730740
Email: admin@stmarysbexhill.org
Website: www.stmarysbexhill.org
Twitter: @stmarysbexhill

A photograph of two young girls in green school uniforms. The girl in the foreground is smiling and has her arms crossed. The girl behind her is also smiling and wearing glasses. They are in a classroom setting with desks and chairs visible in the background.

"...driving forward...increase opportunities for them (pupils) to fulfil their potential."

OFSTED CARE INSPECTION 2016



St Mary's School and College (Registered Charity 307021)
Wrestwood Road
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN40 2LU

Telephone: 01424 730740
Email: admin@stmarysbexhill.org
Website: www.stmarysbexhill.org
Twitter: @stmarysbexhill



Photography by Simon Newbury