

Claremont School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	845/6010
Unique Reference Number (URN)	114640
URN for registered childcare	EY286277
Inspection number	386835
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Claremont is a non-selective, independent, co-educational day school for pupils aged from one to 16 years. It was founded in 1925 and registered in 1929 as a preparatory and nursery school, situated in over 100 acres of grounds in a rural area outside Hastings. In September 2011, it opened a senior school located on a different site at Bodiam with the intention of opening a sixth form in due course. The school also owns a study centre in northern France.

There are currently 405 pupils on roll, 113 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with 22 children under the age of three years. Thirty eight pupils are in the senior school. There are 74 children attending part-time. There is a very small minority of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The Nursery department is open for 50 weeks a year. There are 66 children in receipt of free nursery education. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school was last inspected in November 2008.

Claremont School aims to 'provide an enthusiastic and stimulating learning environment in which the pupils can openly develop interests of their own whilst experiencing a variety of new skills'.

Evaluation of the school

Claremont School provides an outstanding quality of education. Pupils make outstanding progress in their learning because of the very high quality of the curriculum and teaching. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting very positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding because its leadership and management secure the best outcomes for all children. Robust safeguarding arrangements contribute to the outstanding provision for pupils'

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents.

welfare, health and safety. The school has acted on all the recommendations made in the last inspection and continues to meet all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, it provides a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy a rich variety of stimulating learning experiences across the six areas of learning and develop very good communication and reading skills, which serves the needs of pupils who are at early stages of learning English very well. Children learn French from the age of four years, which enhances their language and cultural development. In the main school, the curriculum is broad and very well balanced between academic, creative and physical areas of learning. Reading skills are greatly enhanced by the use of an online programme aimed at assessing and accelerating each child's progress, and at fostering a love of reading. From Year 5, pupils benefit from being taught solely by subject specialists. In Years 6, 7 and 8, the curriculum focuses on preparing pupils for entry to selective secondary schools. In the senior school, the curriculum includes all the National Curriculum subjects, along with philosophy. It is designed to enable pupils to take a minimum of 10 subjects up to GCSE level.

Throughout the school, there is a very strong provision for basic skills and cross-curricular links that make pupils' learning more coherent and more enjoyable. While pupils develop a broad range of information and communication technology skills, not all Year 9 pupils find it easy to access computers outside lessons. The creative curriculum is a great strength throughout the school, providing strong foundations for further study of art, drama and music. The excellent provision for physical education (PE) is extremely well served by extensive sports facilities. Drama, music and PE are taught by specialists. Careful planning ensures good progression and continuity of learning from year to year and identifies priorities for further development. Since the last inspection, the school has achieved greater consistency between the key stages and subjects, resulting in a more homogeneous educational experience for pupils.

The provision for pupils who have learning difficulties has greatly improved and is now good and well coordinated, which is noted by several parents and carers. These pupils are supported very effectively by individual educational plans based on thorough assessments and one-to-one sessions where needed. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) reflects the ethos of the school and has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. The programme of careers education is good. Pupils say that they benefit enormously from an annual careers fair hosted by the school. The curriculum is extremely well enriched by a wealth of extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding throughout the school. Teachers are well qualified and highly skilled, which lends confidence to their teaching styles. They communicate enthusiasm that motivates pupils to learn. Teaching is underpinned by

very high expectations and a thorough understanding of pupils' prior attainment, needs and aptitudes. Consequently, pupils are consistently challenged through open-ended questions and tasks that match their needs closely. Teachers establish excellent relationships that create a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in which pupils can be themselves and are encouraged to think creatively and independently. Very effective use of resources supports pupils' learning very well. Teachers promote pupils' communication skills extremely well by engaging them in paired and class discussion and presentations to the class. Where the teaching is good, rather than outstanding, it is because the lessons are not conducted at the same rapid pace as can normally be found.

Pupils gain a good understanding of how to improve their work through frequent verbal feedback during lessons and through marking and testing. Marking is generally very helpful, although occasionally, the quality slips. Pupils are often involved in the assessment of their own learning by comparing their performance and that of their peers to national norms. In the best lessons, pupils have the opportunity to further improve their work in the light of self- and peer-assessment and as a result, they make exceptional progress. Good systems to track individual pupils' progress enable the school to identify who needs support or stretching. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the planning of activities is based on secure assessments of children's development and staff share an excellent understanding of how individual children can be helped to achieve their next learning step quickly.

As a result of an outstanding curriculum and outstanding teaching, most pupils make outstanding progress in relation to their varying starting points throughout the school. Pupils who have learning needs make good to outstanding progress. Those who speak English as an additional language do equally well because of the outstanding support they receive.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding throughout the school. Their eagerness to learn and enjoyment school life is reflected in their high levels of attendance and response in class. Their excellent moral development is reflected in good manners and a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning and towards their community. Prefects fulfil their responsibilities with diligence and pride. Pupils' strong sense of community is fostered by strong pastoral care, the house system, weekly assemblies and small class sizes. From the Nursery onwards, pupils form very positive relationships, accept their differences and play together in harmony. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the school's zero tolerance of poor behaviour. Pupils' behaviour is good overall. While most pupils display exemplary behaviour and some encourage others to behave well, a minority do not have the expected levels of self-discipline.

Pupils develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence through the nurturing school ethos, teaching skills, PSHE, drama and celebration assemblies. Through PSHE, pupils learn to understand emotions and the principles of restorative justice.

In the senior school, philosophy helps them to develop self-knowledge. Pupils contribute to school life through various leadership roles. They express their views and propose improvements through the school council and food forums. They contribute to the wider community by raising funds for charity and participating in cultural events such as sports competitions and the Hastings Music Festival. The curriculum and enrichment activities ensure that each pupil has opportunities to excel. Pupils perform in numerous cultural events that showcase their talents in music, drama and sports and further extend their creative and physical skills. Through the curriculum, pupils learn to appreciate and respect a wide range of beliefs and cultures, and they gain a good understanding of public institutions.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding throughout the school. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and staff are trained in child protection at appropriate levels and intervals. Checks on staff and volunteers have regard to the latest guidance. All the required policies and procedures, including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, first aid and health and safety, have regard to national guidance, are detailed and are implemented rigorously. Risks are assessed and minimised rigorously before any outing and activity. A high number of staff have first aid qualifications appropriate for the age range. Fire safety requirements are met fully. Supervision is vigilant and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the key person system ensures that each child can turn to at least one adult in confidence. Pupils trust the staff to deal with any issues very effectively. Consequently, pupils feel safe. An up-to-date accessibility plan shows how the school meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Pupils develop a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles through the curriculum and through their participation in sports activities. Most pupils enjoy the nutritiously balanced food served at lunch-time and are encouraged to eat healthily by the prefects and staff who supervise lunches. However, some are not entirely satisfied with the quality or quantity of food provided.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks are carried out on staff and the proprietors to ascertain their suitability to work with children. These checks are appropriately recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises on both sites provide pleasant teaching accommodation in which safe and effective learning can occur. The extensive grounds make an outstanding contribution to pupils' physical development and well-being. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, all-weather outdoor facilities greatly enhance outdoor learning.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. Parents and carers feel well informed of their children's progress through good quality reports and consultations with teachers. They also appreciate teachers' prompt responses to email messages. The school supplies the required information to funding authorities.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet all requirements to handle complaints promptly and fairly.

Registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

The overall effectiveness of this setting is outstanding and secures outstanding outcomes for all children. Robust safeguarding arrangements, well-organised induction systems and excellent care by key persons help children to settle in quickly. Children enjoy each other's company and cooperate very well with each other. They display very high levels of self-control, and they feel safe and secure because staff manage their behaviour skilfully and treat them fairly. Children know how to move safely around the Nursery. Their health is extremely well promoted by consistent hygiene routines, encouragement to eat and drink healthily, and regular walks in the school's extensive grounds. Children contribute responsibly to their environment by tidying up resources after use.

The provision is outstanding. The curriculum provides stimulating activities that systematically build on children's skills and knowledge because planning is informed by secure and continuous assessments of children's learning. The thematic approach and strong partnerships with parents and carers enable staff to follow individual children's interests. Children enjoy learning through play and exploring the world around them by manipulating a wide range of resources. Adults actively engage with children during activities, which encourages children to sustain an activity and to develop excellent speaking skills. Children achieve a consistently good and often excellent level of development in all areas of learning, particularly in their personal development and communication skills. Outstanding leadership and management ensure all staff share a common vision of excellence, engage in accurate and rigorous self-review and work together to sustain the high quality of the provision. All the requirements of the Early Years and Childcare Registers are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- establish the best practice in marking and use of self- and peer-assessment consistently so that pupils gain a clearer picture of what to do to improve their work and make even better progress
- improve pupils' behaviour so that all display high levels of self-discipline.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of the registered provision for children aged from birth to three years

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Nursery, pre-preparatory, preparatory and secondary school		
Date school opened	1925		
Age range of pupils	1–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 174	Girls: 135	Total: 309
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 40	Total: 74
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 11	Girls: 11	Total: 22
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,475 to £12,000		
Annual fees (childcare)	£2,170 to £10,250		
Address of school	Baldslow St Leonards-on-Sea East Sussex TN37 7PW		
Telephone number	01424 751555		
Email address	enquiries@claremontschool.co.uk		
Headteachers	Richard Keeble, Diane Durrant and Giles Perrin		
Proprietor	Mark Beaumont (Claremont School (St Leonards) Ltd)		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Claremont School, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 7PW

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team so warmly when we visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you, seeing you learn and talking to you. You told us that you go to a very good school that prepares you well to move on to your next school without creating a 'hothouse' atmosphere. We agree. We think your school provides you with an outstanding education.

You make excellent progress in your academic learning and in your personal development. You enjoy school a great deal and your attendance is very good. The adults care for you extremely well. We were really impressed by your enthusiasm for learning, your high level of participation in class and your ability to work well independently or in pairs. Your teachers know you very well as individuals and teach you very well. Your good and often excellent behaviour, and your keen sense of responsibility and community, are a credit to your school. You get on very well with each other and make a very good contribution to school life. You feel safe and understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking exercise.

In order to make your excellent school even better, we have asked the school to:

- help you to make even better progress by showing you more consistently how to improve your work
- support all of you to respect the behaviour code and develop high levels of self-discipline.

You will help your teachers to achieve this if you continue to work as hard as we saw during the inspection and strive to maintain the highest standards of behaviour.

Yours sincerely

Michèle Messaoudi
Lead inspector