

Stoneygate School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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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}

Information about the school

Stoneygate is an independent non selective preparatory day school for boys and girls aged three to 13 years. It is privately owned and is located in a rural location to the south of Leicester. The school aims to 'realise the full potential of all pupils by introducing them to a broad range of subjects and experiences at an early age'. The school prepares pupils to sit the Common Entrance Examination to a range of public schools in Year 8.

The school is registered for 363 pupils. There are currently 275 pupils on roll, including 18 children in the pre-school who attend on a part-time sessional basis and 16 three and four year olds who are entitled to free education. There is a very small number of pupils in receipt of a statement for special educational needs. The school opened in 1853 and was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2008. The Early Years provision, which is part of the school, was last inspected separately by Ofsted in October 2007 and was inspected as part of this inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Stoneygate provides a good standard of education for its pupils and for those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils receive a broad, balanced curriculum and take full advantage of its rural location. Consistently good teaching results in pupils making good progress, including those who struggle with literacy and numeracy, who are well supported. The school ensures pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education. It has a good track record for meeting its aims and pupils gaining places or scholarships at their first choice of next school. The school has addressed most of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and now meets all but two of the regulations for registration as an independent school. Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall and there are appropriate arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

Quality of education

Pupils study a broad, balanced curriculum which is good and meets the majority of their needs. The curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and there is a strong emphasis on sports and music. Pupils are also able to study a range of foreign languages and take additional instrumental and drama lessons if required. Pupils are

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

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

prepared successfully to sit the Common Entrance Examination for the move to their next school, which is usually in Year 8. The school has effective connections with schools in Oakham, Uppingham and Stamford, which they generally feed into. All of the curriculum requirements are covered, including a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, science and technology. A suitable programme is in place for pupils' personal, social and health education, which includes their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils' artistic talents are nurtured well and a high standard of artwork is achieved. The Arts Festival is a popular feature of the school year. The extra curricular programme is strong with pupils being able to choose from a range of lunchtime and after school activities from knitting to chess, sports and drama. The curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn well and make good progress. Some pupils do not have the opportunity to study Latin if they require additional tuition in the basic curriculum.

Teaching and assessment at the school and in the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently good and pupils say that they mostly enjoy their lessons. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and prepare resources well. Their planning ensures that they generally take account of the broad range of pupils' needs and class sizes are small enough to ensure excellent levels of individual support. Teaching assistants provide support within lessons and additional qualified teachers provide interventions outside the classroom in reading, writing and numeracy. This ensures that pupils who struggle progress well and are able to achieve age-related expectations by the time they leave. Expectations of pupils are generally high, although they are not always high enough for those pupils who learn particularly quickly, and who are capable of thinking and learning independently. Pupils say they enjoy lessons most when they are involved in practical activities and not left listening for too long. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and engage the pupils because the subject matter is relevant, interesting and encompasses several different curriculum areas, for example, the project work in Years 7 and 8. Since the last inspection, teachers provide a greater range of opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively and use their own ideas, although activities are broadly similar for all pupils in the class.

Progress in lessons and over time is good overall. This is evidenced by pupils' work in books and by regular assessments made by the school. Children make particularly good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, progress is not necessarily consistent across the whole school. Although staff know pupils well, not all staff make the most of ongoing assessment in lessons to adapt their plans more finely to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are making good progress against their individual targets due to effective learning support. However, there is no named Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator with overall responsibility for these pupils. Work is well marked and usually indicates what pupils need to do to improve, although not enough time is given to make improvements in all subject areas. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are well focused, serving as good ambassadors for the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school continues to provide a strong emphasis on building pupils' confidence and raising their self esteem. Their increasing maturity is evident as they progress through the school. Pupils that completed Ofsted questionnaires and who met with the inspection team confirmed that they almost all enjoy their time at Stoneygate. Their attendance levels are consistently high and they are aware of the high expectations placed upon them. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils and between the majority of pupils themselves. Pupils informed the inspection team of some occasional low level disruption in some lessons but inspectors found no evidence of this during the inspection and there is generally a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and those who find it more challenging to conform are well supported. As one parent shared, Stoneygate doesn't give up on any pupil! There are many opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities and they take these very seriously. For example, pupils are chosen by their peers to become house or sport captains and are chosen by staff to be monitors for particular tasks. There are strong links with other schools in both the independent and maintained sectors. This provides opportunities for sports fixtures and tournaments and for helping others who may have different needs from themselves.

The school encourages pupils to become involved in various charitable events and to take part in the organisation of fundraising in relation to them. School assemblies support pupils' achievements in all areas of their development, not just their academic development. Opportunities for reflection occur regularly in the personal, social and health education syllabus which is delivered in form time. Pupils' teambuilding is developed by the regular partner and group work taking place in lessons and on activity holidays provided through the school. Their cultural awareness is raised through the curriculum, the regular visits out and the range of visitors to the school. The programme for developing pupils' knowledge of public institutions and services is a weaker element of the curriculum and the school has highlighted this as an area for development.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory, although improvements in this area have been made since the last inspection. There are stronger procedures in place for child protection which is primarily covered by three members of staff who have been appropriately trained. The school has the full range of policies in place as required by regulation, but some of them require updating to ensure complete consistency across the school. Pupils confirm that they generally feel safe and know who to turn to if they have concerns, and that these are mostly appropriately and quickly dealt with. There are regular risk assessments of all areas of the school, including in areas used by the Early Years Foundation Stage and prior to school visits. Pupils are taught how to conduct themselves responsibly and to work and play safely around others. The school tries earnestly to supervise vehicles coming in and out of the school and to

patrol pupils walking across the car park. This has reduced the risk of accidents in this part of the grounds although not totally eliminated it. There is a satisfactory level of fire safety; fire drills have been routinely and regularly practised. The school acquired brand new fire fighting appliances last term. However, fire doors are sometimes propped open. Electrical equipment has been tested annually. There have been improvements to maintaining the attendance registers since the last inspection and the admissions register meets the regulatory requirements. The school has new arrangements for supervising visitors to the site. The school fulfils its duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Procedures for the recruitment and appointment of staff meet requirements. These include the maintenance of a single central register which shows details of relevant checks on the suitability of staff, including supply staff, and proprietors.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation used for the school are appropriate for effective learning. There is a modern block, housing good specialist rooms for science and information and communication technology, and a traditional former residential building with stable block and outbuildings. A more recent addition is a large stand alone hall which is well used for assemblies, indoor physical education sessions and drama. The smaller internal hall is used appropriately for dining. There is also a well equipped kitchen which is kept scrupulously clean and meets high standards as confirmed by the environmental health officer.

The school benefits from extensive grounds which allow for on site sport and cross country running. Resources are mainly of good quality and are adequate to ensure the current curriculum can be implemented, with the exception of some of the outdoor resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is provision in both main buildings should pupils become ill. The school is striving to embed security arrangements for all parts of the accommodation.

Provision of information

The school provides a good amount of information for parents and carers, for example, through its prospectus and its helpful website which signposts more detailed information available in school. Parents and carers say they are happy with the opportunities available to them to discuss their children's progress, and they report that there is daily and close contact when required. Written reports fulfil requirements to keep parents informed about their children's attainment and progress. The school sends the local authority details of income and expenditure incurred by the school for pupils whose education is wholly or partly funded by them and also sends them information required for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Almost all of the parental questionnaires returned were positive in their response. There were no discernible trends in the negative responses, although some isolated concerns on the streaming arrangements in classes and a small

number of parents were disappointed that not all children were able to study Latin. There was praise for how closely the school works with parents and carers when a problem arises and according to their children's needs. Most parents and carers believe their children are happy and that the school is meeting their needs.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the last twelve months.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children's individual starting points are broadly as expected for their age and they make good progress. Outcomes are good. By the time children enter Year 1, their skills and abilities usually exceed those expected in the required six areas of learning. Children learn to become independent and make choices about their learning. They progress particularly well in their understanding of the links between sounds and letters and in early reading because of the rigorous way in which these skills are taught.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults know the children well through ongoing assessments of their needs and interests. Very occasionally, opportunities for learning are not maximised because children's understanding is not checked often enough or work which is not the child's best is accepted without further challenge. Staff provide positive role models and ensure that children are secure and cared for well. The wider environment of the school grounds is rich and used regularly to enhance children's understanding of the natural world. However, children do not have daily and free access to outdoor classrooms which offer learning opportunities in all six areas of learning. Parents and carers are involved in their children's education, feel well informed and part of the school 'family'. Those staff who work in each of the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms work hard to ensure leadership is good, for example, by pursuing and implementing relevant training. However, leadership at the strategic level does not, for example, evaluate how well children progress in each area of learning throughout their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that improvements are driven as quickly as possible.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- ensure there are effective procedures for managing visitors to the school site and those who require entry to the school buildings (paragraph 11).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide adequate security arrangements for the grounds and buildings (paragraph 23(d)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

School

- Make greater use of ongoing assessment information to better adapt the planning for the needs of all pupils in the group, including those who are quick to learn, and to ensure consistent progress across every year group.
- Ensure the school has a named Special Education Needs Co-ordinator.
- Update the school's policy documents to ensure they are all current, relevant and inform school procedures. Ensure they are known to all staff to develop consistent practices across the school.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- Strengthen leadership and accountability at a strategic level to bring more rigour to self-evaluation and action planning for improvement.
- Ensure daily and free access to outdoor learning experiences which are planned to be of equal quality to those indoors.

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 Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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	Preparatory Day School with Pre-Preparatory Department		
Date school opened	1853		
Age range of pupils	3-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 141	Girls: 116	Total: 257
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 8	Total: 18
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 7620 - £10,080		
Address of school	6 London Road Great Glen Leicester LE8 9DJ		
Telephone number	0116 2592282		
Email address	johnmorris@stoneygateschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	John Morris		
Proprietor	Jeremy Josephs		

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.



10 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stoneygate School, Leicester, LE8 9DJ

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school last week. It was lovely to speak with so many of you during your lessons and in the dining hall, as we think your views are really important. A special thanks to those pupils who showed us around the school or who came to meet with us in the library.

We do think that your school is good and can see why the vast majority of you enjoy coming to school. This is evident in your exemplary attendance record and your positive attitude to work. Those of you with particular talents in sport, music or the arts are particularly well nurtured. You grow in confidence over your time at the school and make good progress in most year groups. Some of you who transferred from other schools said that you are doing better here than you have done previously. Because of the good quality individual support you all receive and good teaching, you do well in your examinations and entry to your next schools.

We would like your school to continue to improve, so we have asked the leaders to do a number of things.

- Make better use of assessment information to make sure that work is never too easy and that you all make enough progress in every year group.
- Ensure the school has a named Special Education Needs Co-ordinator to further support those of you with very particular needs.
- Update the school's policy documents, such as those for behaviour, to ensure they are known to all staff and applied consistently across the school.
- Strengthen the overall leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure children in the Pre-school and Reception classes have daily and easy access to high quality activities outdoors.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector