

# Stella Maris School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	3566016
Unique Reference Number	106154
Inspection number	316854
Inspection dates	13 – 14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Stella Maris School is a primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11. It was founded in 1979 by Stockport Convent and has a Catholic foundation. The school is now a charitable trust and accepts pupils of all faiths. There are 68 pupils on roll, four of whom attend the part time nursery class. The number has increased slightly this year. There are four mixed-aged classes. The school aims to: *'Offer pupils every opportunity to reach their fullest potential while learning to live and work with others in harmony and sympathetic understanding.'* It promotes *'the pursuit of excellence and the enjoyment of study'*.

## Evaluation of the school

Stella Maris School meets its aims very successfully. It provides a good quality of education for its pupils and ensures that they have very good attitudes and a good work ethic. Pupils reach standards which are in line with or better than those expected for their age. Pupils make good progress and good provision is made for those who need additional support. The provision made for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good, as is their welfare, health and safety. The school meets nearly all of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good and the curriculum is satisfactory. The school teaches all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and national guidance is used effectively by teachers to ensure that pupils progress well as they move through the school. There are satisfactory policies in place for all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers plan lessons carefully on a two-year cycle in order to ensure that pupils do not repeat work. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and pupils develop and use these skills effectively in their learning. There is a good range of resources in school, particularly for English, mathematics and science. However, while well cared for and suitable, some of these are now becoming a little tired. The school is aware of this and is taking action to replace them.

Good provision is made for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for physical education (PE). Pupils play a range of sports and have good opportunities to learn new skills. Key Stage 2 pupils have swimming lessons at a local pool and there is an annual sports day. Pupils visit places of interest outside the school, some of these are within walking distance and others are further away.

Specialist teaching is provided for music and dance and for science and personal, social and health education in Key Stage 2. Music is a strength of the school. All pupils learn recorder and some learn piano and guitar. They sing beautifully and with evident pleasure and enthusiasm. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Children in the Reception class have a programme of activities appropriate to their age and ability. The Foundation Stage Curriculum is used to plan work and activities which help them make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. During morning sessions they focus on reading, writing and mathematics. In the afternoons, when they are joined by the Nursery children, they work in small groups on more practical activities. Information gathered from assessment helps staff to plan future work and to check the progress made by individual children. Children have good opportunities to share their ideas with others. Their independent skills are good. The outdoor area used by the children has been recently resurfaced and provides an attractive and safe outdoor classroom.

Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress because teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered at a brisk pace. There is a range of different activities during each lesson: pupils have good opportunities to listen to teacher explanations, share their thoughts and ideas with others and complete individual tasks which consolidate their understanding. Different age groups within each class are given different work which accurately meets their needs and teachers ensure that questioning allows every child to contribute.

Teachers ensure that pupils have a good understanding of concepts and ideas. They link new learning to that which is already known and encourage pupils to identify patterns and relationships. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are prepared for secondary school entrance examinations. In order to facilitate this, separate classes have been created during morning sessions.

The school assesses pupils regularly using its own internal tests. Information gained from assessments is used to plan work and to tackle any underachievement. Pupils do not take national tests and assessments at seven and eleven but the school is developing its use of standardised tests. Information gained during the past year is now used to track individual progress and measure attainment. Information gained

from assessment data, together with work seen during the inspection, suggests that pupils reach standards which are in line with or sometimes above those expected for their age. All work is marked carefully by teachers in accordance with the school's marking policy. Some marking is particularly helpful: it tells pupils what they have achieved and what they must do to improve.

Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. Teachers use praise well to ensure that all pupils achieve as much as they can. Good support is provided for those who need a little extra help. The support given to a small proportion of pupils with very specific needs is very good. Resources are used very effectively to ensure that they make good progress within mainstream classes.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The school has a strong Catholic ethos but welcomes pupils of all faiths. Class prayers and assemblies have a strong spiritual and moral message, and pupils are given good opportunities to reflect and give thanks. Adequate provision is made for their cultural development. All pupils are tolerant and accepting of others. They learn about other faiths and cultures in religious education (RE) lessons and the school has adequate resources for multi-cultural education. Pupils celebrate their own festivals but the school does not make enough of the opportunities available to focus upon the rich and diverse cultural and religious practices of pupils and their parents. Pupils consider the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and raise money for charity. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their attendance is excellent. Their behaviour is outstanding; they are polite and communicate confidently with adults and with each other. Pupils carry out responsibilities within the school but some felt these opportunities are too limited. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for their future lives and for their future economic well-being.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good although one important regulation requires immediate attention. The designated person for child protection, and the staff, have not received recent training in the safeguarding of pupils. All policies are in place and the school successfully promotes anti-bullying, friendship and caring for others. The school does a great deal to promote healthy eating and has offered suggestions to parents as to what should be included in packed lunch boxes. This is based on current guidelines and is designed to promote healthy lifestyles. The school has a water purifier and pupils are encouraged to drink water. There are good systems in place to ensure that all pupils feel safe. Pupils joining the school are given very effective support which helps them to settle in.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has carried out the necessary safeguarding checks for all staff.

## School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory. The building is clean and well maintained. The use of bright colours and displays of pupils' work provide an attractive and welcoming environment. Good use is made of the school hall for PE, music and dance lessons. There is a small library with a suite of computers. There is a good sized yard and an outdoor play area for the youngest children. The school does not have a field but uses nearby sports fields.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents are provided with a good range of information. There is a school website and the prospectus, which has recently been reviewed, provides most of the information which is necessary. This is supplemented by a very useful parents' handbook. Parents can view additional information on request. Parents receive two reports a year and have opportunities to meet with their children's teachers. Additional meetings can be arranged with the school if needed. There is a termly newsletter and an active parents' association. The Board of Trustees meets regularly and its members receive good information from the headteacher.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints procedure which complies with most of the regulations. Any complaints which are made are dealt with effectively and outcomes are recorded. The school acts on the recommendations made. Some parents commented that they were not aware of the complaints procedure.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the three people forming the panel investigating a complaint have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- use assessment information more effectively to track the progress made by pupils as they move through the school
- ensure that all parents are aware they can request a copy of the complaints procedure.

## School details

Name of school	Stella Maris School		
DCSF number	3566016		
Unique reference number	106154		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1979		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 38	Total: 64
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,590.00		
Address of school	St John's Road Heaton Mersey Stockport Cheshire SK4 3BR		
Telephone number	0161 432 0532		
Fax number	0161 432 9440		
Email address	office@stellamaris.stockport.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Whittell		
Proprietor	Trustees of Stella Maris School		
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI		
Dates of inspection	13 – 14 November 2007		