

Claremont School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	845/6010
Unique Reference Number	114640
URN for registered childcare	EY286277
Inspection number	329551
Inspection dates	13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy 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). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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 Pupils, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Claremont is an independent, co-educational preparatory and nursery school. It is situated in over 100 acres of grounds in a rural area outside Hastings. It was founded in 1925 and was originally a day and boarding school. It now caters for pupils from 1 to 14 years who attend on a daily basis. The school has a nursery department (1 to 4 years), a pre-preparatory (4 to 7 years; Reception, Years 1 and 2) and a preparatory department (7 to 14 years; Years 3 to 8). The nursery department is open for 51 weeks a year. Children join the school at different points from nursery to Year 8. At the time of the inspection there were 387 on roll. The current headteacher joined the school in 2006 and there have been more recent changes to the senior leadership team.

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'. Pupils learn French from the age of four, and the preparatory school pupils make use of a study centre in northern France which is owned by the school.

Evaluation of the school

Claremont School provides a good quality of education. Curricular provision is good and appropriate plans are in place to extend it further. Pupils are well motivated and make good progress. As one parent said 'My child enjoys school and hates to be ill and miss it'. Teaching and assessment are good overall with some outstanding teaching. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and

¹ Schools which provide childcare for pupils from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

their behaviour is outstanding. The traditional ethos is supported by good relationships between staff and pupils. Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has appropriately addressed unmet regulations and areas for development. Although some parents still feel that they do not know enough about the complaints procedure (an issue in the last inspection), the school has recently comprehensively overhauled the parents' handbook in order to provide the information required. The school has made a good start on implementing the new requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. There are significant strengths in the EYFS provision which is good. The EYFS is well led and managed and has continued to improve since the last Early Years inspection. It provides a good start for the children and they make good progress.

The school meets all the regulatory requirements which were inspected.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good overall. The school is currently reviewing the range and balance of subjects and has made some positive early changes. While teacher knowledge and understanding of the pupils is generally strong, this is not always the case for pupils with additional learning needs. The senior leadership team recognises that links could usefully be strengthened across all departments of the school to ensure more consistency.

In the EYFS pupils have good opportunities to choose activities for themselves and they enjoy what they do. The school is aware that the nursery premises put constraints on the use of the outdoor areas, especially for two classes. In the EYFS there is a strong emphasis on the basic skills of numeracy and literacy and the teaching of reading skills is a strength. Pupils make good progress and reach higher than average levels by the time they are five years old. In the main school, basic skills are developed well and the recent focus upon reading has paid dividends. Links between subjects are effectively supported by a topic based approach in the lower part of the school, in the themed days for the older pupils, and in particular projects such as the creation of 'Joules islands' in Science. Striking displays of pupils' work are evident throughout the school and provide them with a rich and stimulating environment. Provision for music and drama is strong and the teaching of French throughout the preparatory school, supported by visits to France, adds to pupils' achievements and their awareness of another culture. Sporting and performance opportunities further enrich the curriculum, even though cross-country running is by no means popular with all.

Teaching and assessment are good. In the EYFS staff successfully help pupils to develop key skills and independent learning as resources are well organised and all the required areas of learning are planned for. Assessment is generally good, based on careful observations of these pupils' achievements. However, the photographic records used to share nursery pupils' individual learning journeys with their parents are not yet in use in the Reception classes.

Pupils are keen to learn and by the time they leave the school generally make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. This enables them to succeed in common entrance examinations, gain scholarships or transfer to the secondary school of their choice. The school has recently developed a system that enables it to track and monitor pupils' progress over time in the preparatory department. This has yet to extend across the school in a way that would enable the senior leadership to interrogate the progress made by specific groups of pupils from EYFS onwards. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and, as a result, pupils are very responsive to instructions, confident to ask and answer questions and offer their views. Subject teachers have good curricular knowledge and resources are used well. Teachers generally plan lessons carefully although lesson planning varies in type and quality across and between departments. Teachers know their pupils well, have high expectations and encourage them to work hard and behave well. Good use is now being made of individual learning targets in some subjects and the school appropriately has plans to extend this.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Within the predominantly Christian ethos, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Although some parents have specific concerns relating to their own children, the large majority are positive about how much the pupils enjoy school. This enjoyment is evident in pupils' good attendance and attitudes to learning, and in the way they respond to staff and to each other. One pupil who had experienced a few other schools before coming to Claremont describes it as 'the best in the world'. Pupils say that if bullying takes place it is dealt with quickly and one parent's view supports this: when her child was subject to bullying the approach 'was very calm and practical and it was dealt with right away'. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and behaviour, in the context of such a wide age-range, is outstanding.

Pupils make a positive contribution to their own and the wider community. From an early age they learn to take responsibility for the resources which they use in class and at play. They enjoy raising money for causes such as the paediatric department of the local hospital and demonstrate an increasing ability to do the 'real jobs' which the school gives them. The head boy, head girl and prefects are elected and take their duties very seriously. The school supports the key skills of literacy and numeracy effectively and pupils become confident users of information technology, developing skills which in the long term will support their future economic well-being. Pupils benefit from opportunities to extend their knowledge and awareness of public services and institutions through the good range of visitors and experiences provided by the school. The school's harmonious atmosphere exists to some extent regardless of, rather than because of, the range of pupils' cultural or ethnic backgrounds. However, their awareness and understanding of different faiths and cultures, demonstrated in their religious education lessons, is strong.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school makes satisfactory provision for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Arrangements for first aid and emergencies are secure, and appropriate safeguarding procedures have been put in place. The small classes and the compact classrooms, although sometimes slightly cramped, add to pupils' feeling of security. Most, although not all, pupils enjoy their lunch, demonstrating a good approach to healthy eating. The school has responded well when a pupil has had specific dietary needs. The extensive grounds and play areas promote active lifestyles effectively. In response to requests from older pupils, the school is rightly considering how best to use all the changing facilities in order to afford them more space and privacy. While this is a positive move, some pupils and their parents feel that more could be done to take their views into consideration in future. For example, pupils' lockers do not provide a secure place for them to store their belongings, and can be dangerous when the doors are left open. The school is taking action to ensure that the fireplace in the entrance hall is suitably protected. There is a thorough plan in place showing how the school intends to improve facilities for adults and pupils with disabilities which is now due for review.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their welfare is given a high priority and is promoted exceptionally well. Most children settle quickly into school life because the staff use parents' knowledge of their children effectively. Children develop an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe and move sensibly around the school. They learn to adopt healthy lifestyles because they are encouraged to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise. They understand when they have to wash their hands. Children's personal development is outstanding because staff form very effective relationships with them, manage them thoughtfully and are committed to equal opportunities. Children from all backgrounds play and learn happily together and are friendly and welcoming. Staff encourage children to express their views and respect others' contributions. Consequently, children feel valued and develop very high levels of self-confidence. Their behaviour is good or better and they are keen to learn, as reflected in their very lively responses. They develop good skills in numeracy and literacy and a good awareness of the world around them. The teaching of French enhances their language development very successfully.

Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation is used carefully and useful key priorities for development are identified, such as the children's use of information and communication technology and the broadening of children's understanding of the world around them. However, as the progress of individual children is not tracked rigorously, self evaluation is not as well informed as it could be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

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:

- make full use of the new system for tracking to monitor and evaluate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils as they move through the school
- establish greater consistency between departments to ensure that all pupils are supported to make as much progress as they can
- ensure that further initiatives are consistently underpinned by consideration of pupils' views, safety and well-being
- extend the use of the outdoor areas in the EYFS.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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

How effectively are pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do pupils achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Claremont School		
DCSF number	8456010		
Unique reference number	114640		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY286277		
Type of school	Nursery and preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1924		
Age range of pupils	1-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time)	Boys: 171	Girls: 138	Total: 309
Number on roll (part-time)	Boys: 44	Girls: 34	Total: 78
Number of aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 31	Girls: 25	Total: 56
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
Annual fees (day)	£ 4,875 - £8,325		
Weekly fees (childcare)	£27 - £44 as per session/day		
Address of school	Baldslow St Leonards-on-Sea East Sussex TN37 7PW		
Telephone number	01424 751555		
Fax number	01424 754310		
Email address	enquiries@claremontschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Richard Keeble		
Proprietor	Mr Mark Beaumont		
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI		
Date of inspection	13 November 2008		