

Stoodley Knowle School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	880/6001
Unique reference number	113568
URN for registered childcare and social care	EY306091
Inspection number	333823
Inspection dates	3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Thomas Fisher-Smith

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.

Age group: 2-19

Published: January 2010

Reference no: 090071

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection 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 pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Stoodley Knowle School is located on a 65 acre headland site overlooking the sea at Torquay in Devon. It is non-selective in its intake and provides for 216 children and pupils from the age of two years to 19 years, all of whom are girls. The school has a Nursery for children who are almost three years of age and who then move to the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage receives government nursery funding for 18 children. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school, which opened in 1925, is owned and run by the Roman Catholic Order of the Daughters of the Cross. The aims of the school are to provide for excellence in all aspects of education and to help girls develop their gifts and talents to the full. The school was last inspected in September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Stoodley Knowle School meets its aims by providing an outstanding education for its pupils and for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has achieved an outstanding balance in its provision for pupils' academic and personal development and sporting achievement. The curriculum in the main school is outstanding and very well tailored to the needs of the pupils. The implementation of the curriculum for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and prepares them well for their entry into formal education. The quality of teaching and assessment is consistently good throughout, and also has many strong features. In conjunction with children's and pupils' enthusiasm for learning this accounts for them making outstanding progress. The school has secure arrangements for the care and safeguarding of pupils. Their behaviour is outstanding, so that by the time they leave they have developed into mature, thoughtful and responsible young people. The school has continued to maintain the levels of outstanding provision reported at the last inspection and meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The school provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Provision is underpinned by an outstanding curriculum and the planning of this has maintained the high standards, throughout the whole school, noted at the last inspection. In the main school the curriculum follows the broad requirements of the National Curriculum but this is adjusted appropriately to meet the needs of groups and individual pupils. There is a good emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills and the impact of this is evidenced in the high quality content and presentation of pupils' work. Modern foreign languages, such as Spanish and French, are introduced from an early age. In the upper years the curriculum becomes more finely tuned to meet the needs of pupils with individual talents and preferences. It is common for pupils to be taught in very small groups, enabling them to receive specialist tuition and thus achieve final high standards in public examinations. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught, although not to GCSE level. A significant number of older pupils expressed the wish that they might be able to do this.

Effective schemes of work underpin the implementation of the curriculum throughout the school. These result in good quality lesson plans, which follow a common format and consider the full range of pupils' attainment. All pupils study religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Aspects of PSHE are also included within many other subjects. In physical education, for instance, the morality of performance enhancing drugs was questioned. A wealth of high quality, extra-curricular opportunities encompassing the arts, sport and voluntary work ensure that pupils experience the widest possible range of opportunities for their personal development. They take full advantage of these.

Older pupils receive effective careers advice and, where practicable, follow courses that support their choices. Discussion with these older pupils indicates clearly that they have firm ideas about their futures and have selected occupations or professions that they would wish to pursue.

As at the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching and assessment is at least good throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers also bring many outstanding features to their lessons which make the learning by all pupils much more effective. The impact of this is that, when value-added measures are taken into account, pupils achieve national accreditation standards that place them within the top 5% nationally. Pupils have a love of learning and all lessons are characterised by their impressive enthusiasm. This is one factor which explains why the pupils make such outstanding progress. Where teachers use a range of methods within a single lesson the learning becomes more effective and accessible to all pupils. In a Year 7 English lesson, for example, some pupils read their work to the class who then provided constructive criticism for ways

in which it might be improved. The authors, equally, were able to offer a stout defence as to why they had written it in the way they had. Teachers throughout the school, because of their considerable expertise and subject knowledge, consistently demand high quality responses from their pupils. This challenges the pupils to extend and enhance their knowledge and understanding of each subject. These skills are also used in context. For example, Year 6 undertook outstanding work on the writing of a play designed for radio.

Throughout the school pupils' progress is outstanding. This is the result of consistently good quality teaching but it also derives from the attitudes and work ethic that pupils apply to their studies. Any pupil who has a difficulty is identified through effective assessment procedures and provided with additional help. Alternatively any pupil, including those with learning difficulties or deemed to be gifted or talented, may attend after school sessions where staff are on hand to provide additional help.

The school has sustained the high standards and outstanding quality of provision reported at the last inspection. Excellent use is made of the school's extensive site to develop and enhance the academic and sporting achievements of pupils. The provision for ICT has improved but remains an area for further improvement, as it is not routinely used within most lessons and this inhibits the pupils' opportunities to fully enhance the quality of their learning and research skills.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils, including those within the Early Years Foundation Stage, is outstanding, as is their personal development. This is similar to the last inspection and fully reflects the school's aim for excellence throughout and to provide a Christian education firmly based on moral principles. The spiritual development of children and pupils is outstanding because from an early age they are encouraged to appreciate and recognise the world around them in all its forms. The provision is so good because of the dedication and commitment of the sisters and staff throughout the school to developing pupils' spirituality.

Pupils speak openly, and without prompting, of how much they enjoy the school. They are particularly appreciative of all the staff, whom they feel know them well. Sisters and staff both care for and care about the pupils. All pupils indicated that they feel safe at the school and, although some indicated that occasional disagreements occur, they did not recognise bullying as an issue. They particularly praised the staff for responding quickly to any acts of perceived unkindness. Parents also are fulsome in their praise for the work done by the school in this regard. Pupils have a keen understanding of right and wrong.

Pupils express a genuine fondness and loyalty for the school and this is reflected in their very good rates of attendance. Within lessons they have developed a passion

for learning and throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their behaviour is outstanding. Older pupils are given opportunities to work with the youngest children, for example, to practise their teaching skills prior to a visit to their 'adopted' school in Kenya, where these pupils undertook a similar role. This visit extended the cultural experience and understanding of these older pupils, one of whom described it as 'a life changing experience'. The school has an outstanding sense of community and many cultural events and visits are used to promote a good understanding of local and multicultural issues.

All pupils are deeply involved in charitable fund raising and so gain a solid understanding of the needs of the broader, local and international communities. Last year the Year 11 pupils adopted the charity 'No more landmines', raising a three-figure sum from various imaginative activities. The school also effectively promotes, in children and pupils, an understanding of British institutions. By the time pupils leave the school they have matured into articulate and confident young adults, well prepared to meet their next phase of education and life. A majority are successful in their applications to prestigious universities. Their attitudes and empathy towards the wider world are outstanding, as are their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

This aspect of the school's work, judged as good at the last inspection, is now outstanding. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place and pupils firmly indicate that they feel safe. Even the youngest children indicated that they felt safe by saying they were looking forward to attending school the following day. Parents agree that the school has a noticeable, warm family atmosphere, which at the same time provides demanding challenges that develop the personal qualities of their children.

Prior to their appointment all staff are checked through the Criminal Records Bureau for their suitability to work with children and the school management is aware of the new and additional responsibilities with regard to the safe appointment of staff, maintaining a single central register of the checks made.

Pupils are encouraged to live healthy lifestyles through such means as 'fruity Fridays' and the wide range of challenging physical activities that are provided. A majority of pupils take part in daily physical exercise, either as individuals or as representatives of the school in the wide range of sports. The provision ensures pupils' physical safety is secure. Appropriate risk assessments are in place, including those for fire risks and the many adventure activities offered by the school. The youngest children are very closely supervised as they move around the extensive site and finely tuned staff vigilance enables them to be very aware of what is happening. The school meets its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, as are the outcomes. Children achieve consistently good, and in many cases outstanding, levels of achievement towards the early learning goals. They are very well known to the staff and this raises their self-esteem and self-confidence. Children show high levels of independence, for example, in getting themselves ready for outdoor activities and curiosity in their indoor and outdoor learning about their senses.

In the stimulating setting the children benefit from the efficiently organised and well resourced programme to enrich their learning. Assessment is soundly based on thorough and well documented evidence.. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding, with well informed and trained staff. Leadership and management are outstanding, as is the support from the leader, who takes an active role in children's learning. Staff have a clear knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and plan a detailed and comprehensive programme of activities for them, with opportunities to initiate their own learning. For example, the youngest group make 'tea' in the home corner and the older Nursery children act out a favourite story. Children's health, safety and well-being reflect good safeguarding practice. Relationships are outstanding. The high quality care and education are evident on the children's faces as they enjoy their time in school. There is good, balanced provision for independent learning indoors and outside, although the area outside the Nursery lacks paving and cover for use in inclement weather or direct sun.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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:

- include within more lessons the access that pupils have to facilities for ICT, so as to enhance the quality and range of their knowledge and research skills
- provide a larger paved and covered area immediately outside the Nursery to enable the children to access the outdoor area in all weathers.

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 good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?	✓			
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?	✓			
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?	✓			
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?	✓			

School details

Name of school	Stoodley Knowle School		
DCSF number	880/6001		
Unique reference number	113568		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY306091		
Type of school	Roman Catholic Girls' School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1925		
Age range of pupils	2-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 216	Total: 216
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 15	Total: 15
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,125 – £7,830		
Address of school	Ansteys Cove Road Torquay Devon TQ1 2JB		
Telephone number	01803 293160		
Fax number	01803 214757		
Email address	headoffice@stoodleyknowle.devon.sch.uk		
Principal	Sister Perpetua		
Proprietor	Trustees of the Order of the Daughters of the Cross		
Reporting inspector	Thomas Fisher-Smith		
Dates of inspection	3 December 2009		