

# Inspection of Stella Maris School

St John's Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 3BR

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Inspection dates: 3–5 December 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders are successful in promoting the school's mission to 'inspire, educate and nurture' pupils. They welcome pupils into a caring and happy environment. Leaders succeed in their aims to develop pupils' academic and social skills and help them to gain entry into grammar schools. They have high expectations of every pupil. As a result, pupils attend well and achieve high academic standards.

The small class sizes are valued by parents, carers and pupils. Staff provide individual support to help each pupil succeed. Pupils say that they like the 'family atmosphere'. They have good attitudes to learning and behave well. They feel safe and are kind towards each other. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any bullying if it should arise. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe outside of school and when they use social media and the internet.

Pupils' personal and social skills are enhanced in a range of extra-curricular activities, including after-school clubs, visits and outdoor learning. Pupils have a good understanding of moral issues. They understand British values and respect different cultures and faiths.

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents comment positively on the school's 'caring ethos and high aspirations' for pupils.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and trustees make sure that all of the independent school standards are met. The school complies fully with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Trustees are committed to the school and support leaders effectively. The headteacher is a skilled leader and teacher. She successfully drives improvement.

Teachers and support staff work together well. Staff enjoy working at the school. They say, for example, 'I feel very proud to be part of an amazing team. I really enjoy coming to work.'

The curriculum is designed to provide pupils with a broad education. Teaching covers all subjects of the national curriculum in depth. Specialist teachers plan and deliver physical education, music, French and religious education. Leaders plan other subjects in collaboration with teachers. Teachers are keen to develop their skills further. The school improvement plan identifies the development of teachers' skills in subject leadership as a priority.

Pupils develop their key knowledge and skills in each subject as they move through the school. Children get off to a flying start in the early years provision for 3- to 5-year-olds. Early years teachers welcome and encourage children. They plan activities that are based on children's interests and experiences. Children feel at ease and grow in confidence.

Children develop a love of reading early on. Children in the early years were spellbound as they listened to 'Twas The Night Before Christmas'. Early reading and phonics skills are taught effectively. Children are confident readers when they move into Year 1.

Teachers continue to read high-quality literature with pupils in all classes. Older pupils read competently to support their learning across the curriculum. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 develops pupils' reading comprehension skills so that they can analyse texts, retrieve information, make inferences and explain their responses. However, these skills are not taught in a planned manner up to Year 5.

The mathematics curriculum follows the national curriculum and extends beyond it in Year 6. Children in the early years learn about and use numbers, shape and measures in fun activities. Pupils develop their mathematical knowledge effectively across the school. They successfully apply their knowledge to reasoning and problem-solving exercises in their practice books. However, pupils in some classes are not confident in using mathematical language to explain their methods and reasoning.

The teaching of writing is strong across the school. In the early years, children enjoy activities that develop their fine motor skills. Skilful teaching in Years 1 and 2 enables pupils to write accurately, imaginatively and with confidence. As pupils move through the school, their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are developed well. Pupils develop a good understanding of the features of different types of writing. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' writing is varied and interesting.

In history, pupils make connections and build on their prior learning effectively. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 draw on their knowledge of the differences between the lives of the rich and poor in Tudor England when they learn about the diseases and cures of the time.

All pupils make strong progress across the broad curriculum. They achieve the school's aims, which is to help them pass examinations to enable them to access places into the schools of their choice. The most able pupils can access learning beyond the primary curriculum. Any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) develop their knowledge and skills in all subjects alongside their peers. Where appropriate, leaders engage specialist support for pupils' specific needs.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding policies and safe recruitment procedures are thorough. Records of incidents are detailed and fit for purpose. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies where appropriate, to make sure pupils' needs are met. Leaders make sure all staff are fully trained. Leaders keep staff and trustees up to date with safeguarding requirements and school policies. Staff are vigilant and know what to

do if they have any safeguarding concerns. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from risk in and out of school. They are aware of the risks associated with the use of the internet and social media.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In mathematics, pupils become fluent with number bonds, multiplication facts and calculation methods through frequent practice. Pupils also practise reasoning and problem solving throughout school. However, pupils from classes up to Year 5 do not use mathematical language confidently to explain and develop their thinking. Teachers should ensure that pupils are taught to use mathematical language effectively to explain their thinking in all classes.
- Pupils develop effective early reading and phonics skills. They experience a range of quality books and develop a love of reading. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are taught reading comprehension skills effectively. However, pupils in Years 1 to 4 are not systematically taught comprehension skills such as drawing inferences, predicting, retrieving information and using evidence to summarise ideas. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum is organised sequentially to support pupils in Years 1 to 4 to develop their reading comprehension skills over time.
- Leadership of subjects is at various stages of development. Trustees and leaders should continue to develop teachers' knowledge and leadership skills so that they can have more of a role in developing subjects.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106154
<b>DfE registration number</b>	356/6016
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	10092280
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	59
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Trustees of Stella Maris School
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs S Fleming
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs N Johnson
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,100
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 432 0532
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stellamarisschool.co.uk">www.stellamarisschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@stellamarisschool.co.uk">office@stellamarisschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November–1 December 2016

## Information about this school

- The school admits pupils of all faiths. It has close links with the Catholic Church and provides preparation for the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Communion for Catholic children.
- Informal assessments of pupils' abilities are carried out prior to enrolment. The school does not take part in standardised assessment tests (SATs). Leaders use their internal measures of pupils' progress for reporting to parents.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the headteacher, curriculum coordinator, special educational needs coordinator, teaching staff and trustees.
- We looked at reading, mathematics, history and writing in depth. Inspection activity in these subjects included: evaluation of curriculum planning, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, listening to pupils read, discussion with subject leaders and teachers, and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- We looked at safeguarding procedures and records of safeguarding and behaviour. We spoke with staff and pupils to check their understanding of safeguarding procedures.
- In addition to the subject-focused activities, we looked at pupils' learning in the wider curriculum and provision for their personal development.
- We looked at school policies and improvement planning.
- We spoke with pupils about school life and their views on teaching and behaviour. We took into account the 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers. We considered the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Eastwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

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