

Inspection of Claremont School

Baldslow, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 7PW

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils describe their school as an amazing community where newcomers are welcome. Staff work tirelessly to make this a reality. Pupils from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds talk positively about how joining the school was marked by kindness. Some describe friendships 'that will last', with deep conviction.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Standards are high because staff are determined and encourage pupils to be their best. Pupils are expected to contribute positively to all areas of the school. As a result, they work hard, learn to become resilient, and achieve very well.

Additional opportunities to develop and broaden pupils' interests are manyfold. Understanding how robotic arms work, singing, dancing and 'conditioning' (preparing a football player's body and mind to achieve their best) are among a myriad of topics that pupils talk about when asked about their school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do equally well here. Staff are adept at identifying pupils who need additional support. Being different is not a barrier to success. Pupils themselves are accepting of each other, even on the rare occasions when they fall out. They describe their school as 'safe' and 'problem free', though they have mixed feelings about their lunches.

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

This is a school that continues to move forward. Leaders at all levels are determined to build further on the strengths that are firmly established across the school. Those in positions of governance are effective in supporting the school to grow and improve further. Their oversight of key aspects such as safeguarding and ensuring that the independent school standards continue to be met is sound.

The curriculum has great breadth and prepares pupils well for their next steps. Despite this, staff are not afraid to make changes when they feel these are needed. Tradition has its place at Claremont but is not a hindrance when curriculum design and evolving pupil cohorts are considered.

One real strength of the school is the wide range of enrichment opportunities it provides for pupils, whether they are day pupils or boarders. The school day is as full as it is long. The curriculum beyond the academic gives pupils opportunities well outside the norm. Clubs and extra-curricular activities adorn daily timetables. Both sites of the school are well resourced. Sports halls, theatres, swimming pools, science labs, acres of sports pitches and a dedicated sixth-form centre provide the springboard for pupils to be themselves and to succeed.

The curriculum is taught by specialists. Staff are dedicated and act as advocates for their subject areas. Their enthusiasm rubs off on pupils, who are not afraid to share forthright views about their favourite lessons. Pupils appreciate the way staff

support and encourage them in their learning. Inspectors' classroom visits showed strong and respectful relationships across both sites of the school. This year's small Reception class is no exception, where children's emotional security is as important as their learning. Staff in Reception are equally knowledgeable about teaching across all areas of the early years foundation stage. Resources are used well, and children learn in a safe and nurturing environment, making excellent progress from their varying starting points.

Pupils with SEND are also supported well in and out of the classroom. Staff use a range of strategies and resources to aid pupils who need additional help. Expectations for these pupils are equally high, but staff understand pupils' barriers and are skilled and patient in their approach to adapting their teaching.

The school's work to teach pupils to read has a high priority. A new phonics programme has recently been introduced for younger children. This is appropriately resourced, including bespoke training for key staff to support pupils who may struggle to read fluently. Older pupils are keen readers. This includes when delivering their own speeches as part of the school's wider work to support their personal development linked to the English curriculum.

Subjects such as mathematics and the sciences are popular with pupils across the school. Students in the sixth form also benefit from high-quality teaching in these core subjects. This leads to a range of meaningful qualifications to support their next steps on leaving the school. Approximately half of students in the sixth form are new to the school. Some join from overseas. Those who need additional support with language, typically those who speak English as an additional language, get the help they need to succeed. The school's careers programme gains momentum in the senior school and sixth form. The result is that many students gain places at top universities, while others forge successful careers in sport or the arts.

The school places a high degree of importance on developing each pupil individually. Tolerance and respect for others' points of view are expected and overt in the school's culture. Bespoke programmes of work are readily available when pupils need additional guidance because life's challenges hinder progress. Developing pupils' understanding of the world and the people who live in it underpins the school's ethos and values. Pupils are taught about equalities and aspects such as the protected characteristics as part of the school's personal, social and health education programme. Relationships and sex education is taught in an age-appropriate way.

Staff are positive about their work at the school. The large majority of parents and carers who replied to Ofsted Parent View are equally positive. Many expressed their admiration for staff and their dedication in free-text messages. Few had negatives to share. This was similarly the case with pupils, some of whom struggled when asked by the lead inspector about what could be better about their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

School details

Unique reference number	114640
DfE registration number	845/6010
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10267602
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	1 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	588
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	120
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	91
Proprietor	Claremont School (St Leonards) Limited
Chair	Darren Mee
Principal	Severine Collins (principal) Ed Dickie (headteacher of senior school and sixth form) Gavin Bunker (headteacher of preparatory and nursery school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,601 to £21,801
Annual fees (boarders)	£32,079 to £42,280
Telephone number	01424 751 555
Website	www.claremontschool.co.uk
Email address	office@claremontseniorschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 to 14 March 2019

Information about this school

- Claremont School is a non-selective, co-educational, independent boarding school, registered for pupils aged from one to 19 years. The school also caters for pupils from overseas and runs a football academy as part of its provision.
- The school is situated on two sites. The main site accommodates the school's Nursery, pre-preparatory and preparatory provision. The school's boarding accommodation is situated near the senior school. The senior school and sixth form are situated at:
 - Claremont Senior School, Bodiam, Robertsbridge TN32 5UJ.
- The school's nursery and boarding provisions are registered and inspected separately by Ofsted.
- At the time of this inspection, there were only four children in the school's Reception Year. Therefore, although inspectors visited Reception during inspection activities, no formal judgement was made about the quality of the school's early years foundation stage provision.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in March 2019. A subsequent emergency inspection took place on 3 March 2020, when all independent school standards that were checked were found to be met.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the principal, both headteachers, other leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with one of the directors of the proprietor company. He also met with the regional managing director and the director of learning for Europe from International Schools Partnership (ISP). ISP provides the school with support and aspects of governance.

- The lead inspector met formally with three representative groups of pupils to gain their views of the school. Pupils were also spoken to during classroom visits and as inspectors moved around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages, science and performing arts. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about some other subjects. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a member of staff.
- Inspectors visited both sites of the school. They checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff, linked to the independent school standards.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Inspectors took the responses to Ofsted Parent View into account. Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

Liz McIntosh

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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