

Ghyll Royd School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	3806017
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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

Ghyll Royd School and Nursery is a small preparatory school for boys aged 2 to 11. There are 97 pupils on roll. It was established in 1889 but moved into new premises, with new owners, in 2000. The school is on the outskirts of Ilkley and occupies a renovated country house with extensive grounds. The school is non selective and boys of all abilities attend the school. The school aims to *'Provide a high quality education for boys. Ensuring that they are happy and have a feeling of self-worth'*. This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Ghyll Royd School and Nursery successfully meets its aims. It provides a good education for its pupils and ensures that they thoroughly enjoy their time in school and gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. All pupils make good progress and their attainment is above and sometimes well above that expected for their ages and abilities. The provision made for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and the provision made for their welfare, health and safety is good. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is outstanding. It is based upon the National Curriculum with an emphasis on English and mathematics. National guidance is used effectively to ensure that pupils progress well as they move through the school. There is a clear curriculum plan, which identifies what will be taught in each year group. There are effective policies in place for all subjects. The policy for the teaching of English also identifies how literacy will be taught and developed through other subjects. The curriculum has been adapted very successfully to make it more interesting and appropriate for boys.

Cross-curricular teaching based on a topic approach is a feature of many lessons. In the Nursery children learn through play. The outdoor area is very well planned and resourced. Children have waterproofs and Wellington boots so they can go outside in even the worst weather. In the Reception class, teachers adopt a cross-curricular approach in order to make learning more enjoyable and meaningful for children.

In the lower school teachers vary the approach to learning, sometimes teaching English, mathematics and the foundation subjects separately and sometimes through a cross-curricular approach. Pupils in the upper school benefit from a mix of specialist subject teaching and a topic based approach. The curriculum for these pupils also includes lessons in verbal and non verbal reasoning skills.

The school has a particular focus on music, languages and sport. The new sports hall provides excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of sports. The boys particularly enjoy this aspect of their education. Pupils in the lower school have three hours of sport a week while those in the upper school have four hours. There is a good range of sports available. This does much to develop the talents of those who are interested in particular sports but also gives all boys the opportunity to learn and perfect new skills and to work as part of a team. The school maintains that, 'it can always find a sport that a boy can enjoy.' Boys have the opportunity to play for school teams and to represent the school.

The provision made for music is also very good. Specialist teaching and a well equipped music room help all boys make good progress. A good range of extra-curricular lessons enables those boys with an interest or talent to develop their instrumental skill or to improve their singing. There is a rehearsal room, complete with drum kit and visiting specialist teachers. Regular dramatic performances, in which music plays an important role, ensure boys can showcase their talents.

All pupils, including the very youngest, are taught French and there are opportunities to learn other languages as extra-curricular activities.

The provision made for extra-curricular activities is very good. The boys gain a great deal from these additional activities and appreciate the extra opportunities they provide to pursue an interest or hobby. There is a very good range of educational visits. All classes go out a number of times during the school year. Visits are linked to topics studied in class and are intended to enthuse boys and add interest to learning.

Teaching and assessment overall are good. There is a good mix of experienced and more newly appointed staff. This ensures that the school retains its traditional values but also benefits from new ideas and ways of working. There are many teachers with specific subject expertise, including a sports coach, music and language specialists and other staff with a particular enthusiasm for a subject. Teachers share this love of their subject with pupils and this adds a great deal of interest and enjoyment to lessons.

Teachers know their pupils well and provide very effective support during lessons by varying the complexity of the questions that they ask and by providing well targeted adult support. This means that although all pupils in a class may work on the same task some will have received extra support in order to complete it successfully. Where pupils have very specific learning needs, separate activities are provided for

them. The school is working towards the provision of individual learning programmes for all pupils. However, day-to-day assessment is not always used sufficiently well in all classes to allow this to happen, although extension activities are provided for many pupils in order to make work more challenging. All work is carefully marked and tells pupils what they have achieved. The best marking, of which there is much also tells pupils what they must do to improve. In some classes boys are learning to evaluate their own work and that of others. This is proving to be very effective but is not yet established in all classes. Pupils have targets for improvement and most know what these are.

There are tests and assessments throughout the year including for reading and spelling. Baseline testing for children on entry to school has recently been introduced in the early years and the school uses national tests at the ages of seven and eleven to assess the progress made by older pupils. These are marked internally. The results of these tests coupled with work seen in books and in classes during the inspection show that all boys, whatever their starting points, make good and sometimes better progress and achieve results which are above and often well above those expected for their ages and abilities. Pupils in other forms are also tested so that the school can track their progress and provide extra support where it is needed.

All teachers have very effective strategies for motivating pupils and promoting their learning. These vary between classes and are not implemented consistently across the school. Pupils say that their teachers explain work carefully and that they are happy to ask for help if they are 'stuck'. Teachers present work in a way which is very interesting to boys. They link work to topics or to events in the wider world. One teacher used artefacts from the past particularly effectively in order to enthuse pupils about a piece of writing.

Learning is good. All pupils have very good attitudes towards their work. Small classes ensure that all boys get a great deal of individual attention. Teachers use questioning well to include all members of the class so that all are involved in the lesson or activity. Pupils confidently explain their ideas or give their opinions. This was very clearly demonstrated in the Reception class when a child puzzled over which word should be used when describing states of water. He could not decide if it was evaporating, melting or dissolving.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start with their education. They make rapid progress during the early years of school. All children are confident and well motivated. They enjoy learning because their lives are full of new and exciting experiences. Letter and number formation are taught well in the early years of school and in Key Stage 1. As they grow older some boys do not take as much care with the presentation of their work as they could and some do not

develop a fluent joined script. The school is aware of this. It has introduced a scheme of work for handwriting and is reviewing the policy for the presentation of work. Similarly, writing was identified as an area for improvement and there are very positive signs that the action taken is having the desired effect. Attainment in writing is at least good and sometimes better.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. One parent said, 'The school is a magical place of learning'. The school has a family atmosphere and, like a family, the boys learn to take care of each other. Every boy, whatever their individual personality, talents or needs is fully included in the life of the school. The boys get on well with each other and older pupils are very helpful, tolerant and considerate of those that are younger or who may need a little extra help. The Nursery children are very much a part of the school and add a great deal to the ethos by contributing their excitement and enthusiasm about the new things they are learning.

All pupils take on responsibilities within the school. The oldest boys are prefects and younger pupils say that they sort out disputes and problems very effectively. The school celebrates the achievements of all boys both in and outside school. Friday morning assemblies provide very good opportunities to recognise success. There are very touching examples of older pupils commending younger pupils for things they have done well. Older boys very much enjoy helping out in the office at lunchtimes and acting as 'doormen' before morning school. They carry out these roles very effectively and are very good ambassadors for the school. The boys at Ghyll Royd have very good social skills. They are very welcoming to visitors and courteous to each other and their teachers.

Pupils support charitable events and learn about the lives and beliefs of others in their lessons and during trips and visits. Work in lessons and in after school clubs helps boys gain a good understanding of British institutions. All pupils learn how to live as part of a community and how to accommodate the needs and interests of others in the wider community. In an upper school assembly pupils were asked to identify the 'ingredients' needed for a successful life. All were keen to stress the importance of families, friends and respect and care for others. The school prepares pupils very well for their futures.

Behaviour is outstanding both in class and around the school. All pupils have mature and thoughtful attitudes. During the inspection there was a fire alarm. Some boys who were getting changed after a football match were evacuated along with players from the visiting team. They and the other boys behaved sensibly and responsibly throughout the evacuation on a very cold and wet afternoon. Attendance is good because pupils enjoy coming to school. One parent said his son wanted to come to school even when he was ill.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and the school meets all but one of the regulations. The school has implemented the latest guidance on safeguarding pupils and there are rigorous procedures to ensure they are kept safe. However, although the headteacher is anxious to attend training and has registered for courses, these have twice been cancelled. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for all outdoor activities and educational visits and all policies are in place. Pupils get on with each other very well and boys who are new to the school say it is very easy to settle in. Pupils get very good advice on how to live a healthy lifestyle and school meals are very appetising and nutritious. Relationships between home and school are very positive. Parents are welcomed into school at the start of the morning session and there are very good opportunities to talk to teachers informally. There are two mailboxes in the main entrance. One marked with the name of the headteacher and the other marked governors. These give parents and pupils an additional opportunity to communicate with staff. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

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 outstanding. The landlords have renovated the school to a very high standard. The school is bright and very well decorated and there are a great many additional safety features. There are specialist teaching rooms for science, information and communication technology (ICT), music and games. The new sports hall provides exceptional accommodation for physical education and doubles up as a very effective venue for school performances. Children in the early years of school benefit from a safe and very well designed outdoor play area and the extensive school grounds include sports pitches, outdoor play equipment, playing fields and play ground.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents receive a good range of information. There are two very informative written reports each year and termly meetings for parents. The school has a very well designed website. The prospectus and parents' booklet provide all the necessary information and help parents and pupils settle into the school. There are weekly newsletters including one which is specifically for the Nursery children. Curriculum planning is shared with parents each half term.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clear, fair and well written 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:

- ensure that the headteacher attends safeguarding training as a matter of urgency, paragraph 3(2) (b).

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:

- improve the use of day-to-day assessment in order to increase opportunities for individualised learning
- ensure good practice is consistent across classes.

School Details

Name of school	Ghyll Royd School		
DCSF number	3806017		
Unique reference number	107449		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY 306499		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1889		
Age range of pupils	2 - 11		
Gender of pupils	Male		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 92	Girls: 0	Total: 92
Number of children receiving day care	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 13	Girls: 0	Total: 13
Annual fees	£6,345		
Address of school	Greystone Manor Ilkley Road Burley in Wharfedale Ilkley West Yorkshire LS29 7HW		
Telephone number	01943865575		
Fax number	01943865574		
Email address	information@ghyllroydschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Connor		
Chair of trustees	Mrs Sheila York		
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI		
Dates of inspection	5 - 6 February 2008		