

School inspection report

14 to 16 April 2026

Stonyhurst College

Stonyhurst

Clitheroe

BB7 9PZ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders communicate the school's aims clearly to pupils and parents. They promote them effectively through the curriculum, co-curricular activities, boarding, the chaplaincy and pastoral systems. Pupils are tolerant, respectful and caring of their peers.
2. Governors provide effective oversight of the school's provision, as well as its impact on pupils' academic and personal development. They ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to implement their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are consistently met.
3. Leaders at all levels prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They are committed to continuous improvement. They use self-evaluation effectively to ensure pupils' needs are met. Leaders' proactive and robust approach to risk management ensures that they identify any risks and take decisive action promptly to keep pupils safe.
4. The curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests. It enables them to experience a wide range of subjects from a young age. In the early years and the prep school, the curriculum is enriched through outdoor education, music, drama and languages. Senior pupils experience a varied curriculum which prioritises both academic achievement and wellbeing. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps and achieve well in public examinations.
5. Leaders identify any gaps in pupils' learning promptly. They take appropriate steps so that pupils' needs are met at every stage and they make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well because of the targeted support they receive.
6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported effectively to extend their fluency so that they can access the curriculum effectively.
7. The co-curricular programme is extensive, encompassing around 200 activities across the whole school which vary each term in response to pupils' needs and interests. It provides enormous variety and many activities are instigated and led by pupils. Leaders monitor pupils' participation closely to ensure an appropriate balance with academic work. The co-curricular programme promotes pupils' wellbeing particularly effectively, and is a significant strength of the school.
8. The school's inclusive environment promotes equality, diversity and inclusion across all age groups. Pupils acquire moral understanding, self-knowledge and respectful attitudes. Pupils show a highly developed spiritual dimension which fosters a deep understanding of the non-material aspects of life. They know the importance of respectful behaviour and positive mental health and wellbeing in achieving their goals. They are well cared for and effectively supported as they progress through the school.
9. The boarding houses are welcoming and have a strong sense of community. The school is successful in meeting boarders' needs. Leaders, teachers and boarding staff promote the integration of boarding and day pupils successfully.
10. Health and safety procedures and related policies are implemented effectively. Pupils' welfare needs are met consistently. The premises, including the boarding houses and grounds, are well maintained and secure.

11. Leaders create an inclusive and caring community. This is achieved through many pupil-led events, including assemblies, societies, voluntary and charity work. As a result, pupils gain a deep sense of social responsibility and how they can influence the quality of life for others. The natural integration of boarding and day pupils makes a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development.
12. Leaders ensure that they are continuously informed of pupils' views through effective channels. This has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing, including for boarders.
13. Pupils receive effective careers guidance so that they are well informed about the next stages of their education and the world of work. Pupils receive economic education and are equipped well for life beyond school. However, in Years 7 to 11, pupils' knowledge of finance is not as well developed as it could be.
14. There is an embedded culture of safeguarding at the school. All staff and governors complete statutory safeguarding training. Pupils learn about keeping safe, including online, and have access to effective support systems. The school has a strong partnership with external agencies to support pupils and to protect them from harm. Leaders are especially mindful of the additional risk mitigation required for boarders and children in the early years.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- Strengthen the provision of economic education for pupils in Years 7 to 11 so that they develop a deeper understanding of how to manage money.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' outcomes. They successfully promote the Jesuit values of care and development of the whole person. Pupils' wellbeing is central to leaders' planning and decision-making. This is nurtured through the curriculum, co-curricular activities, the chaplaincy, boarding and the caring interactions between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves. The school values are widely known and reflected in the everyday language used by everyone.
16. Governors and leaders plan and deliver a strategy which promotes pupils' wellbeing effectively. Governors demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development as a result of a robust system of scrutiny. Leaders provide regular, detailed reports, and governors actively engage in school life through personal visits, which include eating with pupils and staff and visiting boarding houses. In this way, governors are well informed about the effectiveness of leaders' work and the implementation of policies.
17. Leaders generate a detailed development plan from systematic evaluation of all aspects of the school. This takes appropriate account of the opinions of pupils, staff and parents. Well-focused improvement actions ensure that the Standards are met consistently. For example, the governors' decision to restructure the school to move Year 7 and 8 into the senior school has had a demonstrable positive impact on pupils' academic and personal development.
18. Boarding leaders recognise, and provide effectively for, the needs of boarders, including those experiencing a new cultural context for the first time. Pupils think highly of boarding staff. Staff create a welcoming environment so that pupils feel included from the outset. Communication between teachers and boarding staff about pupils' needs and progress is effective. This is because leaders set clear expectations for staff to share information frequently so that boarders' welfare is prioritised. The boarding governor often meets with boarders to listen to their views. Leaders provide systematic training for boarding staff so that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles confidently.
19. Leaders in the early years have a detailed and accurate understanding of the requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. They ensure that safeguarding and welfare requirements for the early years are in place. Leaders and staff communicate with parents frequently. This means that parents understand and can support their child's learning and development.
20. Leaders and governors prioritise safeguarding and risk management. Risk strategies are comprehensive. They are constantly reviewed to consider changing current and potential risks. Detailed risk assessments cover the school site, including the boarding houses, and activities undertaken by staff and pupils. Staff are trained to assess risk and to identify and respond to risks as they change over time. There is a robust approach to the planning and approval of educational trips, including pre- and post-trip evaluations to inform future planning.
21. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan is well focused on continuing to improve access to the school and its curriculum for a wide range of pupils with different needs. The accessibility plan is regularly audited and is implemented in full.
22. A suitable complaints procedure is published on the school's website. Leaders encourage parents to communicate any concerns as they arise so that they can be acted on promptly. Comprehensive

confidential records are maintained. These are reviewed regularly by leaders and governors to identify any emerging trends. Boards have clear procedures for raising any complaints about boarding provision.

23. Leaders provide the required information for parents via the school website. They promote positive relationships with parents, including through workshops, coffee mornings and newsletters. Parents receive regular detailed information about their child's attainment and progress.
24. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies, including the local authority and the police. As a result, leaders keep up to date with the latest developments and ensure that pupils access appropriate support when required. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information relating to any funded pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders inform the local authority about pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

26. Leaders provide a broad and varied curriculum. Pupils' knowledge and skills build successfully over time across a wide range of subjects including science, technology, mathematics, languages, humanities and the arts. Teaching promotes the school's values, as well as those inherent to British society. Staff ensure that their teaching does not discriminate.
27. Leaders' inclusive approach to education enables pupils to understand themselves well and build up their capabilities and self-esteem, so that they can achieve high-quality academic and personal outcomes. Pupils achieve well in examinations at GCSE, A level and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) and in Cambridge Technical (CTEC) qualifications. As a result, pupils have a wide choice of higher education opportunities. Many gain places at establishments with demanding entrance requirements, and at international universities.
28. From a young age, pupils are taught languages and develop their writing and oracy skills effectively. In the early years, teachers set targets focused on rhyming and letter sounds to equip pupils with foundational literacy skills. Pupils in the prep school build their confidence and vocabulary when describing what is inferred in stories. Older pupils show advanced verbal and written skills in their analysis of complex texts, as when studying Chaucer or in history lessons where they voice their thoughtful possible solutions to the problems caused by wars. As a result, pupils are articulate and effective communicators.
29. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well across different subjects, as in the accurate use of data in science, geography and physical education (PE). In music and drama, pupils show well-developed creative and collaborative skills. Pupils understand aesthetic values, including nature and the environment, as reflected in the vibrant artwork they create.
30. In the early years, children build trust because of their warm relationships with adults. Children extend their knowledge and skills across important areas of learning, including those supporting their personal, social and emotional development. The curriculum is enriched with outdoor education, enabling children to develop scientific enquiry in a natural setting. The thoughtful organisation of activities ensures that children are highly motivated to learn.
31. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils mean that pupils are confident to ask for help in lessons. Subject clinics are highly effective in supporting pupils who need extra help or extra challenge, to make good progress. Teachers use skilful questioning and resources well to support pupils' learning. Teaching assistants support individual pupils' learning effectively. Teachers' feedback, including online, is precise and diagnostic. It helps pupils to understand exactly what they have done well and what they need to improve. This motivates pupils to improve the quality of their work.
32. Pupils who have SEND have their needs identified early. Appropriate support is put in place to meet these needs, including expert guidance from external agencies where appropriate. Their individual learning plans (ILPs) are carefully monitored and reviewed as pupils' needs change. This informs teachers' planning so that teaching remains effective. Consequently, pupils who have SEND make good progress.
33. Pupils who speak EAL have varying levels of English as a starting point. Leaders' focus on a well-developed EAL programme, and suitably adapted teaching, enables pupils to rapidly extend their

fluency in English, including technical vocabulary, building their skills and confidence so that they can access the curriculum successfully.

34. Teachers help pupils to manage their study time well. Tutors are knowledgeable about pupils' academic progress and personal development. Boarders benefit from a variety of activities and weekend trips. As well as fostering self-confidence, these develop pupils' interests, enhance their cultural awareness and build on friendships.
35. The school provides a notably rich and varied co-curricular programme. The carefully structured 'Stonyhurst Diploma' recognises pupils' involvement in adventure, chaplaincy, performing arts and sport. Leaders have identified contextual risks for pupils during unstructured time, such as the potential dangers of artificial intelligence (AI) and spending too much time on screen. The co-curricular programme mitigates these risks. As a result, pupils develop self-discipline, resilience and advanced leadership skills. Leaders ensure that there is something for everyone. As a result, participation rates are consistently very high. Pupils are enthused, engaged and achieve well. Many activities are initiated and led by pupils, including two school newspapers. The programme provides a balance to pupils' academic work. Tutors closely monitor individual pupils' participation to ensure their needs are met and that they are not overloaded. The co-curricular programme makes a major contribution to the development of pupils' emotional, social, creative and physical skills.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 36. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

37. Leaders promote an ethos which encourages trusting relationships based on mutual respect and kindness. This is taught effectively through the curriculum and co-curricular programme, themed pupil-led assemblies, the chaplaincy and the daily interactions between pupils and staff. The school's Jesuit values and teachers' high expectations for how pupils treat each other are consistently reinforced. As a result, pupils build respect for individual differences. The school's successful implementation of its ethos supports pupils' development of self-confidence and self-esteem.
38. In the early years, the curriculum supports children in their personal, social and emotional development. Teachers encourage them to be open and express their emotions. As a consequence, children become articulate and confident in sharing their feelings.
39. Pupils show highly developed spiritual and moral understanding. This is achieved successfully through theology lessons, Mass and the Daily Examen where pupils and teachers reflect together for a short time at the end of the day. Pupils enjoy singing as a community-enhancing activity. Cultural trips to York Minster and Liverpool Cathedral widen pupils' spiritual thinking. Pupils learn about different religions and how they share common values. Leaders provide quiet spaces for pupils of different faiths for prayer and reflection.
40. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum provides pupils with appropriate content and pertinent guidance, including when online. Pupils learn about key areas such as consent, personal boundaries and the harms caused by alcohol. Younger pupils learn about respectful relationships through stories. As a result, pupils increase their knowledge so they understand how to make considerate and informed decisions about relationships. Leaders consult regularly with parents and pupils on policy and curriculum content. Adaptations are made as a result of these consultations, as in the development of the visiting speaker programme.
41. Leaders promote empathy in the community. Pupils understand and celebrate differences. Boarders representing a wide range of nationalities foster community trust by learning from each other. This creates an environment where boarders are happy and secure. Boarders and day pupils share common goals and integrate naturally. As a result, pupils behave in a considerate and respectful manner.
42. Pupils throughout the school behave well. They learn good conduct through an approach whereby they are intrinsically motivated, rather than reward motivated. Pupils are taught to identify and address any possible bullying behaviours, including online bullying. As a result, incidents of bullying or anti-social behaviour are rare. Leaders deal with these matters effectively when they occur.
43. The physical education (PE) curriculum is carefully structured and delivered by skilled staff. All pupils, whatever their needs, have access to sports and activities that suit their abilities and interests, supporting their physical and emotional wellbeing. The range is extensive with teams and individuals achieving success nationally. In the early years, teachers' careful planning and their effective use of an extensive range of resources enable children to develop their physical skills confidently.

44. Pupils learn about healthy eating and how to protect their mental health in PSHE, PE and science lessons. The caterers provide pupils with a range of healthy food options, including vegetarian and halal, to meet pupils' particular dietary requirements. Staff take appropriate precautions to protect pupils with food allergies.
45. All staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. The school has a well-resourced medical centre, staffed by nurses. This offers a wide range of specialist support for pupils' physical and mental welfare. All medicines are stored securely. There are robust systems for managing accidents. Nurses liaise closely with pastoral leaders to ensure that pupils' individual needs are understood and met. As a result, pupils are well cared for.
46. The school premises, including boarding houses and grounds, are maintained to a high standard. There is a detailed fire risk assessment and regular fire drills occur, including in boarding time. A comprehensive health and safety management system is rigorously monitored by leaders and governors, ensuring high standards of implementation and oversight.
47. Leaders maintain accurate admission and attendance registers. They monitor pupils' attendance levels carefully and follow up promptly and supportively with parents if their child's absence causes concern.
48. Leaders support pupils' security by providing effective supervision during the school day, in the boarding houses at night, at weekends, and when participating in educational visits. This contributes positively to the trusting relations that prevail in the school. Early years leaders ensure that the required adult-to-child ratios are strictly adhered to at all times.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 49. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

50. The school's effective promotion of diversity and inclusion contributes to pupils' understanding of fundamental British values of mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils speak confidently about different cultures and the importance of treating everyone equally. Pupil-led societies representing different cultures such as Hispanic, African and Chinese enable pupils to understand different people. Boarding is a vibrant, diverse and inclusive community where pupils learn the value of living together in harmony.
51. Pupils learn about the harm prejudice and discrimination cause. Pupils in the prep school speak thoughtfully about the struggles of the suffragettes in gaining rights for women. Older pupils explore themes such as power, gender and justice in challenging English texts. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender club is active in raising awareness of the unacceptability of discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality. The school actively promotes discussion of moral principles, including knowing right from wrong. As an example, in theology pupils in the sixth form are challenged to apply ethical thinking to moral dilemmas focused on the themes of intention and consequence, the law and justice.
52. Pupils are taught about democratic processes from a young age. Children in the early years vote on activities. This is expanded in the prep school through the 'teacher for 10' initiative where pupils plan and deliver their own passions to develop their public speaking skills. By the time they are in the sixth form, pupils display advanced communication skills and take part in demanding and respectful debates, as in the Model United Nations. As a result, pupils are well equipped to take an active part in a democratic society.
53. Leaders carefully vet visiting speakers to prevent exposure to partisan views. Similarly, teachers ensure that any discussions with political content are conducted impartially and without bias.
54. Pupils connect meaningfully with society through social projects and demonstrate a deep sense of social responsibility and service to others. Pupils work to support charities, children's learning in local primary schools and the elderly in care homes. Further afield, the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes involves pupils helping those with disabilities. Pupils travel to Zimbabwe and teach pupils in disadvantaged schools new skills such as tag rugby and how to recycle. This varied outreach work supports the aim of developing pupils' all-round skills so that they can question, think for themselves and contribute to society.
55. Children in the early years learn mutual respect and how to share through well-structured activities, learning to build relationships with each other and with nature in the surrounding natural woodland. They develop confidence and begin to understand the relevance of the world around them.
56. The pupil-led school and boarding councils consider all aspects of pupils' school experience. They gather opinions successfully and discuss ideas from across the different age groups. Alongside surveys, leaders routinely use these forums as an effective way of keeping informed about pupils' views and how to improve their experiences. Pupils speak enthusiastically about changes as a result of their work, as in the recent revision concerning access to boarding houses for boarders during the school day and changes in food menus.

57. Pupils receive economic education as part of the PSHE programme. Pupils in the prep school learn about money by managing stalls at the school fair. Pupils in the sixth form learn about student loans and budgeting. In this way, pupils are well prepared for the financial responsibilities of adult life. However, in Years 7 to 11, pupils' knowledge of money management is not as assured as it could be. The nature of boarding life involving cooking and laundry enables boarders to be well prepared for the practicalities of life beyond school.
58. Pupils receive effective careers advice that follows nationally available benchmarks. This helps them to identify their aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses, so they can make informed decisions about their future career or educational choices. Pupils learn about different career pathways from talks by external speakers. They engage in relevant work experience, including online. Leaders promote a wide range of higher education courses, including apprenticeships, that suit pupils' needs and interests.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 59. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

60. Leaders promote a positive safeguarding culture. They have embedded a whole school approach to safeguarding pupils. This ensures consistency of procedure and implementation. There is an awareness that safeguarding issues could arise at any time and that all adults working at the school are responsible for identifying, reporting and acting on concerns. Staff understand the importance of reporting any concerns they have about adults, including low level concerns. Governors provide consistent and rigorous oversight of safeguarding.
61. Staff and governors have regular safeguarding training, including in preventing risks of radicalisation and in countering extremism. This is supplemented with frequent updates to ensure that all staff and governors remain suitably informed. Staff are required to complete and pass training modules to test their safeguarding knowledge. As a result, staff are confident about procedures should they have a concern about a pupil or an adult.
62. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities maintain effective working relationships with external agencies, including the police. They readily seek advice when safeguarding issues arise and, when required, refer concerns to the relevant safeguarding partners. Staff are aware of the increased risks associated with boarding and children in the early years. Safeguarding records accurately describe discussions and the reasoning behind decisions made.
63. From a young age, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, through the curriculum and assemblies. Leaders provide information to parents and encourage them to participate in workshops about safety. A suitable filtering and monitoring system is in place and it is tested regularly. Leaders take appropriate action should any alert occur.
64. Pupils are clear about how to share a concern if they need to. Staff are readily accessible, including medical and counselling staff. An anonymous online reporting system and 'worry boxes' are available for pupils to raise concerns if they do not wish to speak directly with staff. Boarders are aware of the identity and contact details of the independent person with whom they can speak if they have a concern. The boarding governor regularly visits to speak with boarders and boarding staff, so that governors are well informed of their views.
65. Leaders ensure that knowledgeable staff carry out the required pre-employment checks rigorously and monitor records of these checks frequently. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is diligently maintained and routinely scrutinised by leaders and the safeguarding governor. Leaders ensure that they check the suitability of guardians and mitigate risks concerning travel arrangements for boarders returning home.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 66. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Stonyhurst College
Department for Education number	888/6000
Registered charity number	1127929
Address	Stonyhurst College Stonyhurst Clitheroe Lancashire BB7 9PZ
Phone number	01254 826345
Email address	admissions@stonyhurst.ac.uk
Website	www.stonyhurst.ac.uk
Proprietor	Stonyhurst
Chair	Mrs Christine Keunen
Headteacher	Fr Christopher Cann
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	687
Number of boarding pupils	395
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 April 2023

Information about the school

67. Stonyhurst College is an independent co-educational Roman Catholic boarding and day school situated near Clitheroe in Lancashire. It includes Stonyhurst St Mary's Hall for pupils aged 3 to 11. The school was established in the Spanish Netherlands in 1593 by the Jesuit order and moved to Lancashire in 1794. It became an independent charitable trust governed by trustees in 2009. Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new chair of governors, and a new headteacher who will be in post from May 2026.
68. Boarders aged 11 to 18 years are accommodated in eight boarding houses: four for females and four for males. There is one boarding house for pupils in the prep school.
69. There are 29 children in the early years, incorporating three classes.
70. The school has identified 202 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
71. The school has identified English as an additional language for 234 pupils.
72. The school states its aims are following the Jesuit tradition, to inspire its pupils to become men and women for others, growing in competence, conscience, compassion and commitment, who are drawn to live purposefully in the world for the greater glory of God and the Common Good.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 April 2026

73. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

74. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods, assembly and Liturgy
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair, safeguarding and boarding governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

75. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net