

RECOGNITION BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Stonyhurst's ISI inspection praises the school's holistic approach to education, with inspectors giving the college's vibrant co-curricular programme a rare distinction

Stonyhurst's latest Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) report has provided a strong endorsement of the educational approach that has shaped generations of pupils for more than 430 years.

The inspection, which serves a similar purpose to Ofsted inspections in the state sector, confirmed that Stonyhurst meets all Independent School Standards across five key areas of school life. Alongside meeting every required standard, the school received the rare distinction of a 'Significant Strength' for its co-curricular programme.

This recognition reflects the role that learning beyond the classroom plays in the development of pupils from Pre-Prep through to Sixth Form and highlights an approach to education that places equal importance on academic achievement, personal growth and wellbeing.



For families across Lancashire and beyond, the report confirms that pupils benefit from an education that seeks to develop the whole person. Rooted in the Jesuit tradition, Stonyhurst encourages young people to grow intellectually, socially, spiritually and emotionally throughout their time at school.

This philosophy begins in Stonyhurst St Mary's Hall Pre-Prep, where children are encouraged to explore, question and discover through a broad and engaging curriculum. As pupils progress through the school, opportunities expand to include leadership, service, sport, music, drama, outdoor education and a wide range of co-curricular activities designed to help every child discover their strengths and interests.

Inspectors highlighted the impact of this approach, stating: "The co-curricular programme promotes pupils' wellbeing particularly effectively and is a significant strength of the school."

With approximately 200 activities available across the school, pupils are encouraged to pursue their passions, develop new skills and build confidence beyond the classroom. Whether representing the school in sport, performing on stage, debating international issues, volunteering in the community or participating in specialist academic societies, pupils are given opportunities to challenge themselves and broaden their horizons.



William Doherty, Head of Stonyhurst, welcomed the findings saying: "The recent ISI inspection and the performance of Stonyhurst, in not only meeting all standards but in achieving a Significant Strength in our co-curricular programme, provides an outstanding springboard for our future aspirations.

"We hold true to the mindset that innovation is our tradition, that our faith does justice, that our pursuit of academic excellence is complemented by our holistic co-curricular programme and that we form our pupils as impactful global citizens with a true understanding of human excellence as men and women for others."

The report found that this wider educational experience has a direct impact on pupils' development. Inspectors praised the breadth of the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the personalised support available throughout the school. Pupils were recognised as articulate and effective communicators, while senior pupils benefit from an educational environment that values both achievement and wellbeing.

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Inspectors also commended the strength of leadership and governance, noting that leaders are ambitious for pupils' outcomes and that governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's priorities and future direction.

Beyond academic success, the report highlighted the strength of the wider school community. Rooted in the Ribble Valley, Stonyhurst welcomes pupils from more than 37 nationalities. While remaining predominantly British in its make-up, the school provides an environment where young people learn alongside peers from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.

Inspectors recognised the positive impact of this diversity, highlighting pupils' respect for others and their ability to engage thoughtfully with different viewpoints.

The school's boarding provision was also praised, with inspectors describing boarding as: "A vibrant, diverse and inclusive community where pupils learn the value of living together in harmony."

Whether attending as boarders or day pupils, inspectors found that pupils are well cared for and effectively supported throughout their educational journey.

This commitment is reflected in Stonyhurst's aim to form compassionate global citizens. Through opportunities for service, leadership and charitable engagement, pupils are encouraged to look beyond themselves and engage meaningfully with the world around them. From local community partnerships to social justice projects and links with Jesuit communities in countries such as Mozambique and Zambia, pupils develop a strong sense of service, empathy and responsibility.







Safeguarding and wellbeing were also identified as strengths. Inspectors found there to be an embedded culture of safeguarding at the school, praising leaders for promoting a strong whole-school approach to pupil welfare.

For families considering independent education, the findings reinforce Stonyhurst's reputation as a school where academic excellence is balanced by a deep commitment to character formation, wellbeing and personal development. The report paints a picture of a community where pupils are encouraged not only to achieve strong academic outcomes, but also to develop the confidence, compassion and resilience needed to thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Reflecting on the outcome, Mr Doherty emphasised that the report is a testament to the entire school community.

"At Stonyhurst, we remain committed to pursuing excellence with ambition, reflection and a continual desire to grow. This report provides a strong foundation as we look to the future with confidence and continue to build on the outstanding opportunities available to our pupils.

"This outcome is testament to our pupils, staff, governors and families who together make Stonyhurst such a remarkable community."

For a school founded in 1593, the inspection findings demonstrate that Stonyhurst's enduring mission remains as relevant today as ever – helping young people discover their talents, develop their character and leave school ready to make a positive contribution to the world around them. ■

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