

Greater Grace School of Christian Education

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Sheila Ann Boyle

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Greater Grace School of Christian Education is situated in a small village near Chester. The school is registered to admit 14 pupils aged from five to 18 years. There are currently 10 pupils on roll, aged between seven and 17 years. As a condition of admission, at least one of the parents must be a Christian and actively attend the church of their choice. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school opened in 1998 and was approved for registration as an independent school in 2002. The school's last inspection was in November 2007.

The school follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), an individualised Bible-based curriculum which seeks to enable pupils to work at their own pace and academic level in six core subjects each morning. In the afternoon they are taught other core subjects in groups often by specialist teachers or instructors. The school aims to 'draw out the potential of each child, both academically and spiritually, by combining an environment of acceptance, grace and love, discipline, and respect for all irrespective of background, faith, and culture'.

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education and, as a result, pupils make good progress in their learning and development. It has successfully implemented recommendations from the last inspection and the curriculum, teaching and assessment and the provision for pupils' welfare health and safety are now good. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particularly strong feature which is underpinned by strong links between the religious and the secular parts of the curriculum and good support from parents and carers. As a result, pupils' are happy in school and their behaviour is outstanding. The

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are good. The school meets its stated aims well and all regulations for registration are met.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is now good and enables students to make good progress. The ACE curriculum makes good provision for the development of basic skills in English and mathematics as well as for personal, social and health education (PSHE). In the morning sessions, pupils work on individualised booklets from the ACE curriculum known as Packages of Accredited Christian Education (PACEs) which cover six areas: English, science, mathematics, word-building, social sciences, creative writing and literature. This arrangement allows pupils to work at their own pace and to receive support and regular feedback on their performance. In the afternoon sessions, pupils are taught other subjects in groups: these include information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology, French, PSHE and citizenship as well as practical science and mathematics.

There is suitable provision for the development of pupils' creative skills, mainly through art and design and technology lessons where pupils have made skirts and macramé scarves in preparation for the ACE school's annual European Convention. Although theoretical elements of art work are accredited through the PACE assessments, the more practical element of this and other subjects taught in the afternoons are not accredited. Pupils use ICT across the curriculum to present their written work, for displays and for research, such as the work done by older pupils on the distribution of Vitamin C in foodstuffs and its health benefits. There is suitable provision for music and drama through the preparation for and participation in religious festivals and the ACE schools' annual European Convention. Provision for physical education is satisfactory and is enhanced through the support given by parents and carers some of whom help to run courses on badminton, table tennis and athletics. The PSHE and citizenship programme includes opportunities for work-related learning and careers education helps pupils prepare for their future lives and education. Through the European Student Convention, secondary-aged pupils take part in a residential experience where they meet Christian pupils from other European countries. These events enable pupils to take part in social events and in competitive activities such as art and sports competitions.

Pupils do not sit GCSEs or other public examinations. Through the PACE programmes they gain a range of accreditation from the Basic Certificate to the Advanced International Certificate of Christian Education and in this way the school is able to support students who wish to progress to further and higher education.

The quality of teaching and assessment are good. Staff are enthusiastic, interested in the pupils and support them well in lessons. The atmosphere is relaxed yet purposeful. Pupils respond well in lessons by asking questions and establish trusting relationships with their teachers. They are able to take responsibility for their own

learning through the PACE packages and often set themselves challenging targets. ICT is used very effectively to support and extend learning and pupils of all ages are becoming proficient in its use. They check that the PACEs programmes are sufficiently challenging for each pupil. The teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan the afternoon group lessons well, to cater for the different ages and abilities in the classes. Small class sizes allow the teachers to help individual pupils.

The assessment procedures are good overall and pupils are involved in the day-to-day assessment of their work done in their PACE. Work completed in the afternoon is evaluated by teachers but there is no accreditation available for this work at present. Good systems are in place for tracking and recording pupils' progress. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress through regular meetings and end-of-term reports. Parents and carers appreciate the ongoing dialogue with teachers and their close involvement in their children's learning. Samples of pupils' work and assessments show that they make good progress during their time at the school. Most go on to higher education courses.

Resources are satisfactory overall and they are good for the ACE curriculum. Teachers draw on additional resources beyond the ACE materials, such as published schemes, which are adapted to suit the school's needs. Resources for practical science are adequate, having been recently improved.

SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUPILS

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils' spiritual development is key to achieving this outcome. Their attitudes, beliefs and moral development are very effectively shaped by the Christian ethos of the school. A strong code of conduct supported by rewards and incentives reflect the schools aims and impact directly on pupils' good moral development. A strength of the provision, is the good link between the religious curriculum and the lessons in PSHE and citizenship. These links are very well planned and are highly effective in promoting pupils' understanding of right and wrong and their responsibilities to society and the environment. The programme is wide ranging and contributes very effectively in developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They learn about the dangers of smoking and illicit drugs. Pupils learn about their own culture through the study of British, European and world history. This is enhanced through visits to museums, war memorials and more recently a visit to a 'home coming' parade for soldiers who recently served in Afghanistan. They know about British and European institutions and the function of Parliament. A group of older students wrote to their Member of Parliament (MP) to request that the proposed increase in value added tax (VAT) be withheld from food. As part of their citizenship project on 'improving our school', a group of younger pupils wrote to a kitchen design company who provided them with a quotation and a plan for the refurbishment of the school's kitchen. They are now considering ways of raising money to undertake this work.

Older pupils learn about other faiths in their PACE programmes and the links made when they attend functions off site such as career fairs and the ACE school's annual European Convention. However, there are few opportunities for younger pupils to learn about other major faiths and different cultures. The school council provides an effective channel for pupils to express their views and for older pupils to support younger ones. Recently, the summer uniform and the winter dress codes were changed as a result of consultations with pupils. Attendance is well above average and behaviour is outstanding. Pupils say they are happy in school and are eager to learn; they work hard in their lessons. These views are supported in the responses received from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaires and through discussions with them.

SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school's procedures for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety are good. Safeguarding checks are robust and the school has conducted all the required checks on staff. It has appropriate arrangements in place for child protection and all staff are suitably trained. The school maintains a single central register of all checks on staff as required. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and their parents and carers agree. Responses to the parental questionnaires verified that the vast majority of parents and carers are totally satisfied with the education that the school provides.

Staff take great care to look after pupils and they supervise them well. The school has involved parents and carers in working together with them to ensure pupils' safety and well-being, for example, through providing advice on internet safety and in anti-bullying weeks. A unit of work on the dangers of illegal drugs further contributed to helping pupils to keep themselves safe. The school effectively promotes healthy eating and checks on the content of lunchboxes. Opportunities for physical education have increased and more pupils participate in the coaching provided by parents and instructors. Pupils go weekly to a local community centre to play badminton, rounders and have swimming lessons. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.

COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'),

WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly the younger pupils, to learn about different faiths and cultures
- introduce suitable accreditation in subjects not accredited through the PACE programmes.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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SCHOOL DETAILS

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Christian		
Date school opened	September 1998		
Age range of pupils	5-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 9	Total: 10
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,896		
Address of school	Church Lane, Backford Chester, Cheshire, CH2 4BE		
Telephone number	01244 851797		
Email address	ggs@paraklete.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Mulligan		
Proprietor	Greater Grace Christian School Trust		