

Maranatha Christian School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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}

Information about the school

Maranatha Christian School, near Swindon in Wiltshire, is an independent co-educational day school for pupils from 3 to 19 years of age. Admission is non-selective. It was registered in 1999 and offers an education based on 'Biblical foundations and Christian principles'. Currently there are 69 pupils on roll, five of these are in the Early Years Foundation Stage 'pre-school' and attend part time. No children are in receipt of the government nursery grant. The very large majority of pupils are from White British origins. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs.

There are five learning centres where pupils learn in the morning using Accelerated Christian Education (ACE), which is an individualised learning programme. In the afternoon there are practical, group-based activities. The school was last inspected in October 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Maranatha Christian School meets its aims and provides a good quality of education for its pupils and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Over their time at the school, pupils make good progress in this harmonious and purposeful community; this is because of the good curriculum, teaching and support that pupils receive. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is their behaviour, and parents and carers have very positive views about the school.

The provision for welfare, health and safety is inadequate overall, because, although pupils are cared for very well by considerate adults, some aspects of the school's arrangements to ensure safeguarding lack rigour. The school fails to meet two of the regulations related to this area and two aspects of the regulations related to the provision of information.

Since the last inspection in October 2007 the school has maintained its quality of education, has improved its fire safety and recruitment procedures and has provided adequate facilities for pupils who are ill.

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

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The ACE curriculum is well planned and is used appropriately by the school to meet the varied needs of the pupils and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It covers mathematics, English, word building (vocabulary and spelling), social studies and science effectively and pupils progress at their good individual rate. The afternoon programme successfully supplements the morning's work, which is workbook based, with more opportunities to apply knowledge and discuss and work in practical activities. In the afternoons, pupils are grouped by age and are taught a broad range of subjects, including physical education (PE) at the local sports centre, British history, geography and practical mathematics. The recent introduction of science projects is now providing opportunities to observe and undertake practical investigation, rather than depending upon DVDs and workbooks, but there remain limited opportunities for pupils to engage in design and technology, which the school recognises and is addressing. The DVD programme for Spanish enables pupils to develop good accents but gives few opportunities to engage in dialogue with one another or their teachers.

The curriculum is supplemented effectively by a variety of different educational visits and enjoyable activities such as a visit to Warwick Castle, the Science Museum and the local ski slope. The annual Convention which brings together similar schools gives older pupils valuable opportunities to work with others from different backgrounds, to continue their Christian study, to prepare and present in music and drama events and compete in sports.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through the school's Christian ethos that treats each child as an individual. Pupils receive support and resources are sought to supplement the curriculum. Specialist expertise is brought in when appropriate. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive one-to-one support and flourish because of this.

The Christian nature of the school provides an excellent framework for personal, social and health education so that pupils develop good interpersonal skills. Pupils are prepared very well for their future careers through a well-thought-out careers programme. They attend sessions run by a careers adviser that include a workplace interview, undertake a work placement and follow a course devised by the school, 'Looking Beyond', of which pupils speak warmly. Pupils who want to go on to university receive good support with their applications.

Teaching and assessment are good. Pupils work very hard and are guided and supported well to complete their Packets of Accelerated Christian Education (PACEs). There is detailed, ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. All pupils are fully engaged and understand the system. They apply themselves very well to their work, setting themselves challenging personal goals, organising their morning and marking and correcting their work. Supervisors (teachers) have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the ACE curriculum and support its assessment. They encourage the pupils to have high standards and to complete the regular tests meticulously. However, on

a few occasions, opportunities are missed to check what the pupil has learned and understood. The headteacher deploys subject expertise effectively and draws on parents whenever possible to supplement specialist subject knowledge. All lessons are underpinned by pupils' strong respect for supervisors and monitors (assistants) and for each other. On occasions supervisors bring together small groups and this is effective to clarify misconceptions or to teach a particular concept. In the afternoon and devotions sessions pupils work very well together and engage and discuss subjects perceptively. In one or two cases, the focus of discussion and teaching is not specific enough to ensure that all pupils are making the best progress they can.

During their time at Maranatha all pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress. The school sets yearly challenging targets of the number of PACEs pupils are expected to complete so that they are on track to graduate and receive the International Certificate of Christian Education at General, Intermediate or Advanced level. An analysis of the school's data show that all pupils are meeting these goals and a majority of pupils are exceeding them and, in some cases, making outstanding progress. The project work that pupils submit for these qualifications shows evidence of well-structured argument and research that is very well presented, using word processing and other computer applications. Pupils leave for a wide range of different destinations. In recent years they have been successful in their applications to study different subjects at university, including mathematics, information technology and nursing, and the International Baccalaureate, art and design and childcare courses at local colleges.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are self-confident and aspirational. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance, very positive attitudes towards learning and the way in which they speak about the work that they do in lessons as well as fun activities on Fridays and events such as the Convention. All pupils are extremely polite and welcoming. They engage confidently with familiar and unfamiliar adults. Pupils work and play very well together. No pupil is isolated or left out. They are supportive of one another. The older pupils' care for the younger members of the school is sensitive and exemplary, and this is particularly evident in the sessions when pupils help in pre-school.

Pupils are very knowledgeable about Christianity and the Bible. In their study of each PACE they learn different extracts and an extended piece is focused on by the whole school and this is recited confidently by the whole community at whole-school gatherings. Prayer plays an important part in the life of the school and pupils pray regularly through the day; at the beginning of sessions or before a test. While the school promotes a very strong religious teaching based on Christian scripture it also challenges pupils to consider the most appropriate choices for themselves as individuals. Pupils consider different issues and dilemmas very well and learn about other faiths and cultures in their PACE studies.

Pupils take responsibility for caring for aspects of the school and they do these jobs extremely diligently. They have presented their ideas to improve the school in 'oral reports' and some of these ideas have been adopted. They engage readily in fund raising for the school or national charities. Pupils are very positive about the school. A number of pupils spoke about feeling part of a 'big family'. A significant success of this harmonious family is their outstanding behaviour.

A very strong focus on literacy and numeracy prepares pupils well for learning other subjects and for the world outside school. Their strong interpersonal skills, work experience, good knowledge of public services and institutions and their ongoing practice at setting personal targets and organising their own time prepare them well for their future adult lives and economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate. Pupils are cared for very well on a daily basis and they and their parents say that they feel safe. Policies related to child protection meet requirements with the exception of the school's awareness of its responsibility to refer to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. However, aspects of the procedures, for example, the updating of safeguarding training are not rigorous enough. The designated person's training is out-of-date, although there are arrangements in place to remedy this. Some staff have received appropriate training on policy and procedures but this has not been revisited to ensure that all staff, including new appointments, are up-to-date and clear. Some have had no training. The school also uses a significant number of volunteers to help in the classroom and although all have the required checks, most have not been trained in their responsibilities in relation to child protection. The volunteer who works in the pre-school has been appropriately trained. Checks on staff to ensure safer recruitment procedures are conducted and recorded as required.

Pupils feel valued. Adults know them well. There are strong relationships with parents, many of whom contribute their time and support to the school. Pupils feel that adults will sort things out for them in a sensitive and caring way. There are very clear policies that are rigorously adhered to which ensure that pupils' behaviour is very well managed and that their learning remains on track. Pupils are very well supervised. They have a good knowledge of internet safety and appropriate precautions are taken to ensure that they are protected. PE and swimming at the local centre, along with close guidance on packed lunches and snacks, mean that pupils are developing a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles.

The school has a statement of aims to treat everyone as an individual that relates closely to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, but does not have the required current three-year action plan to improve access.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The necessary vetting is conducted on adults prior to appointment to the staff, including Criminal Records Bureau checks. The school maintains all the required information on a single central register.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises are well maintained. Learning centres provide appropriate learning environments. A large barn gives pupils an area in which to play in addition to an outside playground. The school has provided adequate arrangements for pupils who are sick but these are temporary and dependant on the use of a classroom that is not occupied this year. As the school has limited sports facilities it makes appropriate provision at the local sports centre.

Provision of information

The school meets almost all the requirements related to the provision of information for parents, carers and others. The school has a website, prospectus and detailed parent handbook. Parents, carers and others are not informed of the number of complaints in the preceding year and are not sent a copy of the safeguarding policy.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clear, written complaints procedure that meets all of the relevant regulations.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the setting is good, as are outcomes for children. They are very eager to work at their PACEs pre-school work and spend a considerable time on a sequence of different activities. They make good progress, develop their early knowledge of letters and numbers well and acquire the fine motor skills of cutting and writing letter shapes. They cooperate, are very safe, and are extremely polite and caring, for example, checking whether the youngest member of the group needs help. They share equipment and take turns with a minimum of fuss. They develop very good independence skills. They are well prepared for the expectations of the school.

The curriculum is a combination of PACEs, mapped to ensure the coverage of the six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and free play, ensuring a good range of interesting and different activities. Outside play is only available at set times although there are activities to develop gross motor skills led by the supervisor. Provision and teaching are good. Children are listened to carefully and their ideas

built upon. The supervisor has detailed knowledge of each child's development. She uses the information well to adapt work appropriately through the year.

Leadership and management are good. The day-to-day organisation of pre-school is efficient. Welfare requirements are met. The pre-school supervisor has completed appropriate safeguarding training, supplemented by additional, relevant training, and is well aware of her responsibilities and the school's policies. There are very good relationships with parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standard in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the designated person and all staff and volunteers have up-to-date training in safeguarding (paragraph 7).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that parents have information about the number of complaints during the preceding year (paragraph 24(1)(b))
- send to parents of pupils (and of prospective pupils on request) a copy of its safeguarding children policy (paragraph 24(1)(c)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Christian		
Date school opened	1999		
Age range of pupils	3-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 30	Total: 64
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 4	Girls: 1	Total: 5
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,435		
Address of school	Queenlaines Farm, Sevenhampton Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN6 7SQ		
Telephone number	01793 762075		
Email address	reception@maranathaschool.org		
Headteacher	Mr P Medlock		
Proprietor	New Maranatha Christian School Trust		