

# The Vine Christian School

Three Mile Cross Church Centre, Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 1AT

## Inspection dates

11–13 March 2014

## Overall effectiveness

	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### This school is outstanding because

- Pupils make very rapid progress in academic subjects including English and mathematics. Opportunities to excel in literacy and mathematics are provided in all subjects of the curriculum and teachers and pupils take full advantage of this.
- Teachers make an excellent contribution by interpreting the PACES curriculum so as to explain and enrich it. They also ensure that pupils complete their current PACES before they are allowed to proceed to the next stage. This ensures that pupils fully understand what they have been taught.
- Because of the way that Christianity is woven through all that the school does, the school meets its aims very well and is successful in supporting pupils' personal and academic development and in helping them to develop a strong moral compass.
- Pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and show much consideration for adults and their fellow pupils.
- The school's leaders understand well what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning and ensure that it happens almost all of the time. Their involvement of parents as volunteers is also impressive.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The school was given one day's notice of inspection.
- The inspector attended nine lessons, looked at pupils' written and other work, attended assemblies and read policy documents. He also looked at the school's measures to safeguard pupils.
- The inspector had meetings with staff, the pupils and with the Pastor. He met some of the parents acting as volunteers.
- Ten staff questionnaire responses were considered. There were too few responses on Ofsted's 'Parent View' website to take them into consideration.

## Inspection team

Paul Armitage, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Vine Christian School is a mixed, independent day school. It is located in Three Mile Cross on the outskirts of Reading. It was established in 2003. It is registered for up to 30 pupils aged five to 18. It currently has 19 pupils on roll aged six to 17. They are taught in three separate age groups. The school is ethnically very diverse and this includes a small number of Nepalese pupils. There are no pupils with special educational needs on roll.
- The school is located within the Three Mile Cross Church Centre and during school hours it has exclusive use of rooms and the substantial hall where people worship on Sundays. It also uses local sports centres for swimming, tennis and other sports.
- Parents contribute regularly as volunteers towards the operation of the school by giving their time to support pupils and maintain the quality of education.
- The school follows the curriculum and examination system provided by Christian Education Europe. For the most part, pupils are taught using PACES (Packet of Accelerated Christian Education). PACES are published booklets on a wide range of subjects containing guidance for pupils and exercises for them to complete.
- The school is governed by trustees, all of whom are closely connected with the running of the church.
- The school's aim is 'to encourage every pupil to become a mature Christian disciple through an education carefully designed to give pupils academic training based on God's point of view'.
- The school was last inspected in November 2010.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all the documents necessary for the verification of the single central register are kept together in one place so as to facilitate the easy checking by both the school and outside bodies.
- Improve the quality of the facilities for pupils who are ill.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

### Outstanding

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. This is because of excellent teaching, an outstanding curriculum and the pupils' keenness to learn. Evidence from pupils' written work illustrates their rapidly developing abilities in the broad range of subjects provided. Achievement is particularly strong in English and mathematics. Furthermore, during the inspection, pupils were observed making excellent progress in other subjects including social studies, geography, art and history. Teachers use subjects such as history and social sciences very well to develop pupils' literacy abilities. Pupils' ability to explain orally their understanding of topics they have studied is a real strength of the school. In assembly their articulation of things to pray for was impressive. Nepalese pupils progress very well, in part because they are given extra tuition in English when they first arrive in school.

Pupils' progress is tracked very effectively through the use of PACES. Pupils are not allowed to the next, more difficult, PACE until they have mastered the present one. The school and the examinations board use the number of PACES completed by a pupil in a year as a measure of progress. On this basis and using the board's terminology, the progress of pupils in the school was 'exceptional' last year for the vast majority of pupils and is on track to be the same this year. A small number of pupils have now entered for the board's International Certificate of Christian Education at foundation level and are doing well.

The school is very successful in supporting pupils in their transition to further study. This includes pupils going on to further education and subsequently work or university.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

### Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Pupils' manners, politeness to adults, and consideration for each other are exceptional. During the inspection, there were no instances of bad behaviour and pupils confirm that they have never seen or experienced bullying. Older pupils are supportive of younger ones. Attitudes to learning are very positive and attendance is high.

In part, because of their academic success, their self-confidence is developing well. This is also helped by the teaching strategy where pupils, seated at carrels (desks with partitions between them) choose the order in which they will do their current PACES. The strong emphasis on self-evaluating their work using the examination board's mark scheme also helps develop their sense of responsibility. Sometimes the pupils get 'de-merits' for doing something wrong but these wrongdoings are very minor such as taking too long to decide what to do next in class.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their spiritual development is very much focused around their overtly and profound belief in God and Jesus as the son of God. For them, the Holy Spirit is very real. Virtually all of their academic work is linked in some way to understanding God's will and this also extends to all the other activities they experience in school including their respect for peers and with staff. After a morning assembly when the teacher spoke to them about the word 'obey', it was very clear that even the youngest pupil understood this to mean wanting to obey God's wishes rather than just being told to do something.

Pupils have clear moral values heavily influenced by their religious beliefs. In discussions and in their writing, pupils expressed very strong views about abortion and creationism and evolution. Very occasionally, and without realising it, this involves lack of respect for those who hold different views. Teachers quickly recognise this and successfully redress it so that the pupils learn how to develop more considered views. Teachers always provide a balanced view.

Pupils' social and cultural development is outstanding. In addition to the way in which pupils support one another, they have a wider social awareness linked to society as a whole. Every month they sing at a retirement home and, during the inspection, pupils were all very aware of the Pastor leaving for a visit to an orphanage in India and the reasons for the visit. Some of the older pupils recently attended a money-raising event to support the orphanage. There has also been a recent skipping competition to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. The ethnic diversity of the school provides an excellent basis for cultural development. The school reinforces this with visits to places of cultural significance such as a local synagogue and a planned visit to Parliament. There have also been recent projects on both Spain and South Africa.

### Quality of teaching

### Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding. A key reason for this is the way that teachers use PACES to monitor and respond carefully to what each pupil is doing. The pupils work at their PACES and the teacher circulates waiting for pupils to indicate that they need help or that their self-assessment of their work needs confirming. Where the pupil has a problem, the teacher explores the issue with the pupil and resolves it. It is always resolved because the pupil is not allowed to proceed to the next PACE before it is clear that the pupil has understood. In this way, the danger of a pupil moving on before understanding something important is removed.

Another reason why the teaching is outstanding is that while the PACES themselves are very useful documents, it is what the teacher adds to them that makes them so successful. So, for example, while PACES may say much on the structure of the Tabernacle, it is the teacher who provides more information on their context and use, to make things clearer.

The teachers are well qualified. In the afternoons when the curriculum is not linked to PACES they plan their lessons well. In one geography lesson, the teacher had some very well chosen resources and had devised a task which the pupils enjoyed. The resulting quality of the writing and the understanding of the geography were of a high standard. In another lesson, a visiting coach led an enjoyable but challenging physical education (PE) lesson for all the pupils and then took the older pupils for a lengthy run.

### Quality of curriculum

### Outstanding

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. It is impressive for its breadth. It covers all the required areas of learning including English and mathematics and also provides specific PACES in social studies, word building (spelling) and Bible reading. Personal, social and health education is woven throughout with specific elements in science and social studies. History and geography contain a substantial element of citizenship. The PACE-based curriculum that takes place in the mornings is supplemented by afternoon activities such as sport, art and crafts such as woodwork, and a wide range of projects.

The impressive breadth continues as pupils get older and begin to prepare for formal assessments. Pupils have the opportunity to study for the International Certificate of Christian Education at foundation, general, intermediate and advanced levels. Older pupils still use PACES but they are supplemented by projects and essays sometime involving optional subjects such as Spanish, extra science and accountancy. An excellent feature is the way in which pupils gain examination credits when they successfully complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or qualifications in ballet or personal finance. All older pupils must complete the International ICT Driving Licence and the school provides very helpful, individualised career guidance, sometime using Connexions.

The school organises a large number of visits to places of interest but of significant importance is the annual convention held in a school in Somerset when pupils from all over Britain and from abroad meet to perform and compete in a wide range of activities. Performances are judged by professional judges and the credits received by pupils contribute to the assessment of their

progress generally.

While the curriculum is impressive on its own account, above all, it is the way that it is interpreted by the teachers and by the pupils that makes it outstanding.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

**Good**

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and all the regulations are met. All the required policies are in place including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, first aid and health and safety. Staff are suitably trained in child protection and first aid. Risk assessments are carried out regularly including those for fire and pupils' visits outside the school premises. Pupils are properly supervised. There is a sanctions record but it is empty because there have been no serious sanctions. Recruitment checks on staff and volunteers are rigorous and there is a properly constituted single central register. One small criticism is that although the school had all the required information to verify the register, it was not all located in one place meaning that verification by both the inspector and the school took longer than it should. The admission and attendance registers are in good order.

Pupils learn about keeping healthy through their PACES and put it into practice in the food that they bring for lunch and in their enthusiasm for PE and games.

### **Leadership and management**

**Outstanding**

The quality of the school's leadership and management is outstanding. There is a small management team, the members of which have a strong determination to provide pupils with an outstanding education. This is reflected not only in the quality of the education they provide but also in the pastoral care they offer. The pupils are very well looked after.

The management team has a very good idea of how well the pupils are achieving. The PACES provide a very clear picture of pupils' progress. The system of teaching and care that managers operate means that they and all the staff are able to give fine attention in detail to any academic or pastoral difficulty experienced by a pupil. As a consequence of this, the quality of self-evaluation is high and managers know what works well and what does not. Because there is only a small number of staff, there is no formal staff appraisal but everyone knows what others are doing and how successful it has been or how it can be improved if necessary.

A major success of the management team is the way it has encouraged parents to become involved as volunteers. Their help is invaluable and it also keeps them well informed about their children's progress and the issues they are dealing with. The school has a rigorous homework programme and the volunteer programme helps parents understand, better, how to help with homework.

The school's accommodation is warm, well lit and well maintained. There is a suitable outside playing area and a very large, internal hall used for a range of activities. The accommodation for pupils who are ill meets the regulations but is limited in size and comfort. Parents receive the required information and the complaints procedure meets requirements.

The proprietor has ensured that all the regulations are met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134424
<b>Inspection number</b>	422767
<b>DfE registration number</b>	872/6013

This inspection was carried out 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Christian day school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	6 – 17 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	19
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The trustees of The Vine Christian School
<b>Chair</b>	Archibald Mitchell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Johanna Esterhuizen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 November 2010
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£2,600
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 988 6464
<b>Fax number</b>	None
<b>Email address</b>	office@thevinechristianschool.org.uk

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