

# Sol Christian Academy

115 Fairfield Street, Manchester, M12 6EL

**Inspection dates** 21–23 October 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school regulations. Their evaluation of the school's effectiveness is over-generous.
- There is not enough systematic checking carried out by leaders to be clear about the performance of the school, such as the quality of teaching and learning, in order to make the best improvements.
- Not enough training is provided for staff to develop the best skills to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to achieve outstandingly.
- Leaders do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop the best spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Students in the sixth form are not achieving well enough and there are too few opportunities to prepare them for their next steps.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics in the early years provision, primary and secondary stages.
- Good teaching in the key subjects ensures pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Most pupils exceed the targets expected.
- Pupils are keen to learn, settle quickly and work diligently on their tasks. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff and parents confirm that pupils' behaviour is good. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying since the school opened.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet 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. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four lessons taught by two members of staff and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in different subjects.
- Discussions took place with pupils and staff, including the headteacher, supervisor and monitor. The inspector spoke on the telephone to the proprietor who was abroad at the time of the inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included the school's prospectus, information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its work, and pupils' workbooks. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke to two parents and took account of four staff questionnaire responses. There were very few responses to the online Parent View survey.
- The Department for Education (DfE) asked the inspector to consider the school's request for material changes involving lowering the age limit from three years to six months and extending the upper age limit of the pupils to above 18 years. During the inspection the headteacher informed the inspector that the school did not want to progress with their request for material changes to the age range of the school at this time.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Woodyatt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is situated near to the centre of Manchester. It has been established to provide mainly for pupils who come from a committed Christian background. It aims to ensure pupils grow in knowledge, follow in faith and serve in unity.
- The school is registered to take up to 50 pupils aged from three to 18 years. There are currently 14 pupils on roll; three children in the early years provision (all of whom are in the Nursery), nine pupils of primary age and a small number of pupils are of secondary age or in the sixth form. No pupils have a disability or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was first registered in June 2013. This is the first full inspection of the school.
- The headteacher and the Principal form the senior leadership. The Principal is also the proprietor. Both leaders teach at the school.
- New staff have recently been appointed to work in the primary and secondary stages and the sixth form.
- The school follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Pupils can access the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) qualification at ordinary or advanced levels.

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

- Raise teaching to outstanding and boost achievement, by improving staff skills in order to provide pupils with work that precisely matches their needs in all learning activities, especially in the sixth form.
- Further develop pupils' awareness of different types of bullying.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - making sure that leaders rigorously monitor all aspects of the school's provision and performance
  - increasing the social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding of pupils by providing more planned opportunities to broaden experiences, especially of other faiths and cultural groups
  - providing more planned opportunities for students in the sixth form to gain the essential experiences, information and support to ensure they can make the best decisions about their next steps.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards:**
  - Ensure that the attendance register uses the correct codes for recording absences (paragraph 17).
  - Ensure the provision of the required information in the school's prospectus (paragraphs 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b) and 24(1)(c)).

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- The leaders have high expectations for pupils to succeed in their studies and to behave impeccably. Staff expressed much support for the leadership of the school and the quality of what the school provides for pupils. Conversations with parents indicate that they are very pleased with the school's work.
- The facilities provided by the leaders offer pupils good opportunities to learn well, socialise with each other and take part in activities, such as sport in the main hall. They have their own desks (known as offices) in the classrooms (known as learning centres). They can develop their technological skills in the media and computer suites. Children in the early years provision can access a secure outside area at the front of the school.
- Leaders carry out observations of staff in order to gain insight into the standard of teaching. However, this is not done frequently enough across all subjects and ages and their own evaluation of the quality of teaching is overgenerous. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of what pupils are learning and their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development, including in the sixth form, to ensure that this is outstanding. This is because the monitoring of teaching is not precise enough. There has not been enough training provided for staff in order to fully ensure these aspects and to boost pupils' achievement.
- The school has developed its own evaluation of its performance and made plans for the next steps. However, these plans are not based on a clear enough understanding of important aspects, such as the quality of teaching, and are not detailed enough in order for the school to quickly make the best improvements.
- Programmes of study provided by the ACE curriculum ensure that pupils have ample opportunity to develop their skills, such as in reading, writing, mathematics, and to explore what is right and wrong in order to boost their moral understanding. Staff ensure group activities give pupils opportunities to work with each other and develop skills, such as social skills. However, there is not enough additional planned provision for their spiritual and cultural development in order that pupils can gain even more knowledge or experience, for example of different faith groups and cultures, in order to prepare them fully for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance registers kept by leaders do not contain enough details in order to demonstrate that they meet the required standards for this aspect. Although leaders have regular contact with parents, which ensures they are kept up-to-date on attendance issues, their records do not include sufficient details on reasons for absence.
- The headteacher teaches in the early years and her good skills ensure that children do well. Similarly, other pupils benefit well from the individual tuition provided by staff. However, the teaching skills of staff recently appointed to work in the sixth form require improvement in order to meet students' needs more effectively.
- The school provides regular termly written reports to parents in order to keep them informed of how well pupils are doing, demonstrating their commitment to providing essential information. However other important information is not provided, such as arrangements for safeguarding and details of the curriculum.
- By the end of the previous inspection the school had not demonstrated to the inspector that the required single central record of checks carried out on staff and proprietors and the complaints procedure were in place. The leaders commented that they quickly provided these to the Department for Education in order for the school to gain permission to open. During this inspection, the single central record was not completed fully, though the leaders were able to correct the administrative errors in order to meet the requirements for this standard.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The proprietor uses the finances well to provide many facilities, resources and appropriate levels of staffing. Systems are being developed to manage the performance of the newly appointed staff but these are at a very early stage of implementation.
  - The proprietor has ensured that teaching is effective so that all pupils are learning the key subjects well, demonstrating the school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity. However, he does not have a clear enough view of the quality of teaching in order to know what needs improving.
  - The proprietor does not monitor the school's systems and performance well enough to be able to identify weaknesses, such as maintaining appropriate attendance registers.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****require improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very polite to visitors and their well-developed manners extend to the staff and other pupils. This leads to a harmonious and studious working environment throughout the school.
- Pupils take pride in managing their own work and showed high levels of motivation towards their tasks. These positive attitudes contribute well to their success in their studies and in the high quality presentation of work in their books.
- Attendance levels were high during the inspection and pupils consistently arrived on time. Termly reports to parents confirm that pupils attend regularly and miss very few days.
- Pupils know the school's system for managing their behaviour well. One pupil proudly displayed the stickers they had received for the high standard of work they had produced. Overall, rewards are used effectively by staff to ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- There are no incidents of bullying in the school's records. Parents, staff and pupils confirmed that there was no bullying or incidents of serious misbehaviour at the school. However, pupils were not entirely clear about the different types of bullying when talking to the inspector.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong. They have ample opportunities in school to take on responsibilities, such as leading group prayer activities. This helps them improve their social skills and demonstrates the school's commitment to tackling discrimination. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for them to learn about and experience other cultures and faith groups and this limits their wider development in these aspects.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Attendance registers do not contain the necessary details, such as the appropriately recorded reasons for pupils' absence.
- Parents, staff and pupils said that the school keeps them safe. Staff carry out appropriate checks to ensure activities are safe for pupils and supervise them at all times of the day.
- The single central record contains evidence of checks for the different staff as required. Leaders are trained in recruitment procedures.

**The quality of teaching****is good**

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and ensures good progress for pupils of primary and secondary age.
- The ACE curriculum utilises booklet resources, known as PACEs, which ensure pupils receive well-structured and resourced learning activities. Staff, including the monitor and supervisor, carry out regular checks, such as written tests, to ensure that pupils are doing PACE tasks at the right level for them. This aspect is highly effective and pupils benefit well from the ACE learning because it matches closely their skills and abilities.
- The programme of PACEs provided by leaders and staff give pupils good opportunities to develop reading, writing, spelling and mathematics skills. PACEs also support pupils' good development in Christian understanding, word building, social studies and science.
- There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to read and they take books away with them every day to read at home. Their records demonstrate how much reading they do. The inspector confirmed their good skills by listening to younger pupils reading out loud, which they did with great competency.
- Pupils have planned opportunities to use the well-resourced media and computer rooms in order to develop these skills. They also learn languages, such as Spanish.
- Staff supervise and oversee the learning well so that pupils have ample opportunity to work through their PACEs every day. Pupils who get stuck quickly seek effective help from staff. Staff also ensure that pupils keep to their challenging targets for the amount of PACE work they need to do each day. Records in the learning centres showed how well pupils were progressing through tasks during the inspection. As a result, they complete a wide range of work and make good progress. However, staff are not clear enough about how to provide the best activities beyond the ACE curriculum, such as activities linked to their spiritual and cultural development, to improve their progress further.

**The achievement of pupils****is good**

- All pupils, including the most and least able, make good and often better progress from their different starting points, especially on activities linked to the ACE curriculum. Pupils reach levels in their reading,

writing and mathematics that are often better than those of similar-aged pupils in other schools.

- The ACE based curriculum is underpinned by a rigorous process of checking pupils' progress towards the targeted number of PACEs, which is closely monitored by staff, to ensure that pupils develop the necessary skills and abilities in each aspect being studied.
- Pupils regularly reach the target number of PACEs set by the leaders on a day-to-day basis. This ensures that they consistently make good progress, but at times limits them from making outstanding progress when the targets are not as challenging as they could be due to staff not having the best skills to identify how well pupils are doing in order to push them on further.
- Activities provided for pupils by staff beyond the ACE curriculum, such as provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are not as structured because staff do not have the necessary teaching skills to identify the best activities. Consequently, pupils do not have the opportunities to make outstanding achievement.

### The early years provision

is good

- Evidence indicates that children make at least good progress in the Nursery because the teaching is good. They develop their skills in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics well and are well prepared to continue with the next steps in the ACE curriculum.
- Checks carried out by staff when children start in the Nursery are used effectively to ensure the best programmes for children to make progress from their different starting points.
- Teaching provides good opportunities for children to learn well when they are in a group or playing on their own. Children play and work enthusiastically and harmoniously, making choices, enjoying their learning and building their confidence.
- Staff keep notes of children's progress at the end of each day and use these to plan the next steps in learning. These records ensure that staff can provide parents with accurate information about their children's progress, such as at the end of each term and year.
- Children enjoy the interesting experiences which support their development in all key areas of learning. Indoor activities, such as exploring the topic of autumn, are stimulating and challenging for all children.
- The outdoor learning environment is used positively to enrich learning, for example, regarding physical development.
- Good teaching ensures children can develop their basic skills in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics to a high degree. One child was counting up to 100 and another could write a number of sentences.
- Staff lead sessions well, including stories and work on letters and sounds. Parents are delighted with how quickly children learn to read.
- Children are happy and well cared for. They develop very good attitudes to learning. Observations during the inspection and evidence from parents indicate that children feel safe and their behaviour is good.

### The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Leaders use written checks to determine the skills of students. When necessary, they provide programmes to boost reading, writing and mathematics in order for students to access the ICCE qualification at advanced level. However, current work involves re-visiting previous learning and therefore not enough progress has been made from the starting points.
- The curriculum ensures that students can develop their moral aspects through the ICCE learning activities and by taking on tasks and responsibilities within the school, such as leading small groups of younger pupils.
- Leaders have recently started to plan for students to experience a wider range of opportunities to develop more fully their awareness of spiritual and cultural aspects.
- Leaders are also beginning to plan for developing employability skills in order to prepare students for their next steps on leaving school. Some arrangements are in place for students to receive the impartial and essential advice and guidance they need although leaders acknowledge that this work is at an early stage of development.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139831
<b>Inspection number</b>	443015
<b>DfE registration number</b>	352/6008

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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 Faith
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	14
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	1
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	3
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kingdom Trust
<b>Headteacher</b>	Irene Tabeth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£3,600
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 637 2944
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