

Inspection dates 14–16 October 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have a strong well-articulated vision to provide high-quality education and opportunities for personal development for all pupils, aligned to their faith beliefs.
- The successful implementation of their vision leads to good achievement, good behaviour and high standards of welfare.
- The curriculum covers all the required elements. It is well planned and has a firm focus on developing pupils' understanding of their society and the opportunities and responsibilities they have. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. As a result, the school is improving.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective because the checks made on adults working with pupils are thorough. Staff know the signs of abuse and neglect.
- Teaching helps pupils understand risk to keep them safe in school and beyond. Leaders make sure that they keep pupils safe and teach them about how to lead healthy lives.
- Pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for. They enjoy their learning and are proud to be members of the school community.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well across a range of subjects. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Leaders check that the lively curriculum is well taught. Teaching is good. It engages and interests pupils. Its strength lies in enabling pupils to discuss their learning frequently in lessons, with each other and their teachers.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children's personal development is well managed and they make good progress in communication, language and numeracy skills.
- Leaders and governors have detailed knowledge of their pupils and keep a close eye on their progress and development. They use this information to provide additional support and challenge to help pupils improve. Leaders put in place actions to improve in those areas where performance is not strong enough.
- Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with their teachers and volunteers.
- Parents play a key role in sustaining these relationships. They make a significant contribution to the day-to-day life of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not achieve outstanding outcomes.
- Teachers do not make use of all the assessment information available to them to help them plan with enough precision to accelerate pupils' progress. As a result, pupils do not achieve the excellent standards of which many of them are capable. This is especially the case for the most able.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening arrangements for monitoring and evaluating assessment data, so as to challenge teachers to plan learning that consistently challenges all pupils at the right level.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is increasingly outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use the full range of assessment information to plan learning activities that move pupils forward rapidly from their varying starting points
 - ensuring that teachers use their knowledge of how well the most-able pupils are doing to plan work that stretches them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share a positive, determined vision to provide high-quality education and welfare for all the pupils in their care. This vision, espoused by staff, volunteers and parents, engenders a strong sense of community and shared endeavour. It underpins the good progress that pupils make and helps them develop well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.
- Leaders and governors check carefully that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders carefully check the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. They use the information from assessment to shape intervention and support when progress falls below their high expectations. They know their pupils very well. Progress is good. However, leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching is such that it enables all pupils to make outstanding progress, especially the most able.
- Leaders use external moderation of assessments in the early years to corroborate their judgements, confirming their accuracy. Leaders keep a careful check on pupils' progress in other years and evaluate the impact of teaching to plan improvements.
- The curriculum is broad based, providing all pupils with a good range of learning opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across subjects. The curriculum is supported by carefully thought through plans that integrate learning in core subjects with a thematic approach. This is used well to broaden and enliven pupils' learning, appropriate to their age and aptitudes. For example, pupils respond enthusiastically to the current theme of 'Dry land', developing a coherent knowledge and understanding of the topic across the range of subject areas.
- Incorporated within the curriculum are good opportunities for pupils to learn about public institutions, understand how democracy works, and develop a respect for the law in England. Aligned to curriculum plans to learn about others' beliefs and lifestyles, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. They demonstrate respect for, and tolerance of, others. They celebrate the wide diversity of each other's backgrounds in the school. This helps prepare pupils to play an active part in life in modern Britain.
- Leaders make sure that pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 learn about the options they can choose when they leave the school on reaching the age of 16. They receive impartial advice about the various options through talking with former students, meeting adults working in a range of employment sectors, and attending the local careers fair. Most continue studying at one of the nearby schools with a sixth form, or follow courses at the local college.
- Leaders have ensured that they are fully aware of the challenges in keeping pupils safe. They make sure that their training is up to date. They have a good understanding about the issues associated with radicalisation and extremism and know their 'Prevent' duty (government advice for schools and childcare providers on preventing children and young people from being drawn into terrorism). They are well informed about the dangers of child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. They ensure that all staff receive regular update training, so that they know the signs of abuse and neglect and what to do if they have any concerns.
- Leaders' arrangements to ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils are underpinned by well-informed recruitment procedures. All the checks required to keep pupils safe are carried out and recorded punctiliously. In this school, where all parents play an active part in school life, leaders carry out appropriate checks on them and record these carefully.
- The buildings are secure. There are carefully thought through risk analyses for both outside activities in the school grounds and visits outside school.
- Governors have updated the school child protection policy in light of the current guidance from the Secretary of State. They have ensured that all staff have read and understand it. They review the policy annually. There have been no allegations against staff or any recorded cause to refer any pupils to social services agencies for any safeguarding concern during the last year.
- Leaders have recently increased the rigour of performance management. Areas for improvement are identified and used to inform targets set for teaching staff. These are linked appropriately to teachers' professional development opportunities.

- Historical complaints to the Department for Education (DfE) included concerns about written documentation on the internet. These complaints suggested that the school supported the use of corporal punishment. Leaders have ensured that the sanctions and rewards procedures in the school do not include such punitive responses. School logs show that all sanctions are in line with those published in the school's policy.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas that need further development. They ask challenging questions of school leaders about the effectiveness of teaching. They keep a sharp eye out to ensure that the premises are suitable, safe and well maintained. Their training supports them well in appointing only suitable adults to work with pupils. They keep detailed records of all the steps taken in staff appointment procedures. The single central register records that checks against identity, qualifications as needed and suitability to work with pupils, are complete. Governors have a good understanding of safeguarding issues, and review the effectiveness of key policies annually.
 - Governors do not link performance to pay awards because staff take the view that such a structure conflicts with the charitable aims of this school. Governors ensure that their arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher are robust and set the direction for continuous improvement.
 - Governors work well with key leaders to ensure that the independent school standards pertaining to health and safety, and conduct of the premises, are planned in detail. All appropriate checks are carried out and maintenance requirements are met. Governors ensure that leaders carefully record any works or repairs that have been carried out. Logs for fire drills, and records of the use of first aid, are fully detailed. Together, these help keep pupils safe.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good

- The quality of teaching overall is consistently good across a range of subjects, including those in the early years. Pupils make good progress as a result. Sometimes pupils make outstanding progress. This was seen, for example, in Key Stage 4 religious studies work where pupils benefited from thinking deeply about what they were doing, and considering different points of view about baptismal rites. Pupils generally engage well with their learning, enjoy it, work well together collaboratively and take good care with their work.
- Teachers plan interesting and engaging activities, skilfully integrating subject-specific learning with literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements through nine themes across three phases in linked cycles.
- They have a very detailed knowledge of the learning needs of their pupils. This helps them pitch work well and build on positive behaviours for learning so that pupils make good progress.
- Work in books and on display confirms that pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects. In a science lesson linked to the 'Dry land' theme, pupils in Key Stage 3 were developing fair test methods for reaction times of copper ore mixed with a weak acid solution. They showed awareness of risks associated with the experiment and worked effectively together to test their hypotheses.
- Teachers' questioning skills usually make pupils think carefully about what they are learning, and they respond well. The consistent focus across all phases on enabling pupils to articulate their responses, helps them develop good oral skills, as well as developing their understanding and their literacy skills.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure in all phases. Homework is set and focuses on pupils' exploration of their ideas and responses to their learning. Together these contribute to the good progress that pupils make.
- Arrangements to check pupils' progress are effective. Teachers make good use of periodic assessment to generate specific learning targets at individual pupil level. This helps improve their learning. Leaders and teachers deploy additional resources through classroom volunteers. These arrangements secure improvements well. Teachers are adept at asking questions in lessons to check understanding and reshape learning when pupils are stuck. This is proving particularly effective in helping less-able pupils.
- Pupils know about the quality of their work and how it is assessed. This encourages them and focuses them on improving their work further.
- The quality of relationships between teachers, classroom volunteers and pupils is high. As a result, pupils

enjoy their learning and are proud of their work. Pupils are keen to learn. They try their best and learn through their mistakes, through exploration and discussion, and from responding to feedback from their teachers and other adults. They are confident that teachers will listen to them and help them. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects.

- The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, are known in detail by leaders and teachers. These pupils are fully involved in lessons because teachers plan learning that engages them. As a result, pupils apply themselves well. The school uses reviews of their needs and the progress they make towards their individual targets to plan carefully the next steps they need to take in their learning. Pupils make good progress as a consequence.
- Teachers exchange detailed information about pupils' achievement and learning at the end of each year. This supports pupils' progress by ensuring that no time is lost covering learning that has already been completed. Teachers make effective use of additional support in lessons to increase the progress of targeted pupils and those who need additional support. They provide clear guidance to classroom volunteers so that their focused work helps pupils improve their work even further.
- Teachers expect pupils to use their literacy and numeracy targets in their work in other subjects. As a result, the work produced in other subjects is typically of the same good standard as that in English and mathematics.
- Occasionally, teachers do not set work or ask questions that are challenging enough for the most able. This prevents them from making the very rapid progress that many of them are capable of.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school's use of an integrated thematic approach to this area of learning complements well the subject-specific learning in English, art, drama, history and religious studies. Pupils go well beyond finding out basic facts about other faiths such as their festivals and the symbols they use. Extended projects help pupils learn about others' beliefs and their religious practices.
- Pupils know about different lifestyle choices and talk about their respect for, and tolerance of, all people, including those who may be gay or lesbian. They have a good understanding about accepting difference and recognising similarity, including those of 'protected characteristics' (specific areas covered by equality and diversity guidelines, and legislation relating to sexuality and gender) under the Equality Act. They speak freely about their beliefs in being respectful to others. One student stated simply, 'This school is all about being tolerant.' They celebrate the ethnic diversity of the school community by learning about each other's family backgrounds.
- Pupils know about risks to their health and safety. They learn about alcohol and substance abuse, how to use the internet safely, how to recognise risk and how to know when it is right to say 'no'.
- Students learn about how democracy works and have put this into practice through electing their own school council. They know about key public services and how these play a part in everyday life.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying. They say it occurs rarely. They feel safe in school, and on the rare occasion when bullying might happen, they report that staff deal with it effectively. Staff provide good role models and encourage positive behaviour, which pupils consistently replicate.
- Together, these aspects prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and support them in knowing about fundamental British values.
- Pupils engage in physical education activities with energy and enthusiasm. They know about healthy eating.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Attendance is above the national average. There is no persistent absence in school. Fixed-term exclusions are very rare. The school ensures that pupils leaving the school have been allocated, and have taken up, a place in another school before removing them from the school roll.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They show that they are keen to learn and apply themselves well to their work, behaving well both in lessons and during social time.

- Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils' attitudes to learning rely too heavily on teachers' direction and do not lead all to excel as they could in their studies. Their attention wanes when they are not challenged well enough in lessons.
- Pupils are supervised well during social time to help keep them safe. They show that they act responsibly towards each other. They are polite and friendly. They take account of each other's needs, for example by helping younger pupils with their games. The school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and state that school rules help everybody get along. They know about the school's sanctions and rewards processes, such as using report cards, for both sanction and reward. They say they know of only a few instances of poor, unacceptable behaviour, and that it is dealt with effectively by teachers.
- Teachers and parents are keen to confirm that behaviour is managed well.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' work, in books and on display, shows that they make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. This is corroborated by observations in lessons and the school's records of achievement.
- Outcomes are not outstanding because pupils do not make excellent progress, particularly the most able. They are not stretched enough.
- In summer 2015, a very small number of pupils sat GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. Some pupils attained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils in both primary and secondary phases who are making expected progress in English and mathematics is high. The school does not use external tests at the end of Key Stage 2. However, school progress tracking information confirms that 95% of pupils are on track to achieve target grades by the end of Key Stage 4. A large proportion of pupils are achieving above expectations in each year group, in particular in English and in mathematics.
- Pupils' books confirm that almost all pupils are making good progress. Their work shows that they use literacy and numeracy skills well across a range of subjects. For example, work in science and religious studies reveals accurate use of language to describe reactions or discuss religious beliefs.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers.
- Leaders do not examine the relative performance of other groups, including those from different ethnic backgrounds because the number of pupils in each group is too small to provide useful analysis. However, scrutiny of work and observations in lessons confirm that those who speak English as an additional language make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- Children in the early years are making good progress. Their work reveals that currently progress is on track to bring about very strong improvements on the outcomes for 2015.
- The quality of art work produced by pupils is high. There is a clear strong line of progression in specific skills using different media and mixed media work.
- All pupils learn to play an instrument. They learn to play the recorder in the primary phase and the clarinet in the secondary phase.
- Pupils' speaking and reading skills develop quickly. They read well. Many are fluent readers, using rhythm and intonation to bring to life their reading aloud. Others showed that they can make use of their early learning of sounds and letters to pronounce unknown words and help them make sense of their reading. Pupils have access to a wide range of books to read and were keen to tell the inspector about their story and what they thought about it.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive focused support where this is needed. They, too, show that they can link sounds and letters, decipher and interpret meaning, and improve quickly. Children in the Reception class were able to demonstrate quick acquisition of key vocabulary to do with comparing 'bigger, smaller, longer, shorter' lengths for measuring.

Early years provision

is good

- Leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have established a calm but exciting atmosphere, in which children feel safe and flourish. They ensure that all the independent school standards are met in the early years.
- Leaders and teachers have responded quickly to improve on the outcomes achieved last year. They have rapidly re-organised the curriculum and changed approaches to teaching. This is leading to a focused, vibrant learning environment, in which children are making good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers take care to note their day-to-day observations of children's activities and learning accurately. These notes, along with their formal observations records, are used effectively to target learning for individual children.
- Resources are good and are well organised to identify specific areas for play, exploration and learning. Consequently, children quickly develop their learning through following their interests and aptitudes in free-flow activities in both the classroom and outside areas.
- Teachers have established a positive and warm learning environment that nurtures children's curiosity and helps them to develop personal skills, such as dressing themselves and readiness to share ideas and learning, and to acquire good listening skills. Children are happy, and chat animatedly about their learning and their experiences in and out of school.
- The children quickly develop their reading, mark making and early writing skills. This is because teachers and other adults pay close attention to providing opportunities and prompts to children that move them forward well. For example, in a numeracy lesson in the outdoor area, children made decisions about the best way of measuring different things, reinforcing their basic number work and their understanding of the concepts of length.
- Teachers have appropriate qualifications, and additional training, such as in paediatric first aid, and this ensures that they keep children safe. They have been subject to the required checks to make sure that they are suitable to work with children.

School detail

Unique reference number	107168
Inspection number	10007853
DfE registration number	373/6027

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Christian independent day school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Christian Family School Trust Ltd
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Baxter
Annual fees (day pupils)	No fixed fees
Telephone number	0114 272 6994
Website	www.bethanyschoolsheffield.org
Email address	bethanysch@aol.com
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2013

Information about this school

- Bethany School is a small independent day school for boys and girls between the ages of four and 16.
- It is a school of religious character and the sole school in the Christian Family School Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- The school educates pupils who come from Sheffield and the surrounding area, admitting pupils without regard to their ability.
- It offers places to families and their children who profess the Christian faith, other faiths or none.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provider.
- Governors do not set a fee for parents. In line with their intentions as a registered charity, parents make charitable financial contributions to the school on the basis of what they can afford.
- The school has a strong focus on promoting family-based education.

Information about this inspection

- This standard full inspection was carried out over two and a half days at the request of the DfE, as part of the standard inspection cycle. The DfE required this inspection to consider the school's progress in meeting all the independent school standards.
- The school was previously inspected in February 2013 under the auspices of the Bridge Schools Inspectorate. The school was judged to be providing a good quality of education. In December 2014, a one-day emergency inspection was carried out at the request of the DfE following concern that the school's policies appeared to suggest that it promoted corporal punishment. The concern was judged to be unfounded.
- The inspector toured the school site both inside and outside.
- The inspector visited classrooms and observed learning in nine lessons, in the early years and in the primary and secondary phases. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and spoke with them about their learning and other aspects of school life.
- The inspector held formal meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and governors.
- The inspector examined school documentation and policies including those for behaviour, safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety.
- All the documents required as part of the independent school standards were reviewed.
- The inspector examined information about the achievement of those students who left the school's education provision in summer 2015. The school's records of achievement were reviewed.
- Account was taken of 41 responses to Ofsted's 'Parent View' online survey.

Inspection team

Chris Campbell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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