

# The Cornerstone School

22 West Hill, Epsom, Surrey KT19 8JD

## Inspection dates

29 September – 1 October 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Governors and leaders have not ensured that the promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety, as well as the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, are good.
- Many independent school standards are unmet and not all school policies meet statutory requirements.
- Leaders have not put in place rigorous systems to check the quality of provision. They are often unaware of how well policies are implemented and where teaching is weak. Consequently, leaders' plans to improve the school have limited impact because they are not sharply focused on the areas that need most attention.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate because staff rarely have the subject knowledge and experience to teach effectively. Expectations of their pupils are too low.
- The work provided for pupils does not meet their needs. More-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in too many lessons. Those who are disabled or who have special educational needs are not clearly identified or provided for well enough.
- Pupils themselves report that they do not get enough opportunities to encounter other cultures and perspectives. There are insufficient opportunities for them to make a contribution to their communities. They are not well enough prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum on offer to pupils is too narrow. There are limited opportunities for sport, dance, drama, art, music and technology subjects. This limits the outcomes pupils can achieve in these subjects.
- Safeguarding arrangements are not effective.

### This school has the following strengths

- Leaders work well with parents to deliver their shared vision of education.
- Pupils generally get along well with one another as well as with the adults in school. Although pupils' attitudes to their work are varied, and their behaviour in lessons is not consistently good enough, they typically behave well at social times and as they move around the school.
- The teaching of mathematics is more effective than in other subjects, particularly in the infants and senior departments.
- The teaching of reading in the infant class is better than in other parts of the school.
- Pupils typically leave school with five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics, albeit in a limited range of academic subjects.

### 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 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring arrangements are made to promote and maintain pupils' welfare and safety
  - developing effective systems for all leaders, including governors, to check pupils' safety and well-being and the quality of teaching and learning
  - developing more rigorous systems for managing staff performance
  - making improvements to the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced and properly prepares pupils for life in modern Britain
  - strengthening governance arrangements so that leaders are held to account for the safety of pupils and the quality of their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - raising the expectations of leaders, staff and pupils about what pupils can achieve
  - providing appropriate training for all teachers
  - ensuring all teachers have the subject knowledge needed to be effective
  - ensuring the behaviour policy is consistently applied so that behaviour in lessons is always at least good.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - providing consistent, effective teaching for all pupils
  - making better use of assessment to plan work at the right level for all pupils, including the most able and those who are disabled and have special educational needs.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - Ensure the school's policy on the curriculum and supporting plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils and do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii)).
  - Ensure pupils experience wider human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative education and acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills (paragraphs 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b)).
  - Ensure pupils' education gives them appropriate personal, social, health and economic education which encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act (paragraphs 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii) and Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010)).
  - Ensure that pupils receiving secondary education have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance presented in an impartial manner that enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options, and that the education provided helps encourage all pupils to fulfil their potential (paragraphs 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)).
  - Ensure that where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs is in place (paragraph 2(2)(g)).
  - Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn, make progress and have effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (paragraphs 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)). Ensure there is consistent, effective teaching for all pupils (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j)).
  - Ensure that there is a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both (paragraph 4).
  - Ensure: the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils actively promotes fundamental British values and enables all pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and ability to distinguish right from wrong, and to respect the civil and criminal law of England; pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour and understand how they can contribute positively; pupils acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services; pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for other people, their own and other cultures, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act, and encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on

which the law is made and applied in England (paragraphs 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(b)(ii), 5(b)(iii), 5(b)(iv), 5(b)(v), 5(b)(vi), 5(b)(vii)).

- Ensure that teaching, in any subject, precludes the promotion of partisan political views and that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils in school, or while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views (paragraphs 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i), 5(d)(ii), 5(d)(iii)).
- Ensure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)).
- Ensure the school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently and effectively (paragraphs 9, 9(b)).
- Ensure all health and safety laws are complied with, policies implemented effectively and pupils properly supervised (paragraphs 11, 12, 14).
- Ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy, and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)).
- Ensure showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over who take part in physical education (paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(c)).
- Ensure the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are guaranteed (paragraph 25).
- Ensure that the school's leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The leadership and management of the school are inadequate because leaders have failed to ensure that many of the independent school standards are met. Leaders at all levels have not ensured that pupils of all ages receive a broad and balanced curriculum, achieve as well as they could and are consistently protected from harm. This is because the school does not follow all the required procedures to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety, including relating to maintenance of the school premises and facilities provided. Leaders have not secured an adequate quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have not put in place robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. Some of the school's policies and procedures, therefore, are not adequately checked and reviewed to make sure they are fully carried out. Leaders do not have a systematic or thorough approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning. This means leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and pupils' experiences are of poor quality, and do not help them to identify areas for improvement. Consequently, plans for improvement are ineffective.
- Assessments, provided to parents, of pupils' learning and progress are not clearly evaluated against national assessment information or the school's stated aims.
- Too much relies on the work of the headteacher. Recent changes to the leadership structure at the school have been put in place to tackle this. There is now a head of each of the senior, junior and infant departments. As yet, however, they do not regularly check the practice of other teachers in their areas of responsibility, and no expectation has been set for them to do so. Furthermore, leaders have not demonstrated that they have the skills needed to bring about improvement at the school. Inadequacies in teaching have not been addressed.
- Leaders have given too little opportunity for teachers to access the continuous professional development they need. Performance management arrangements are ineffective and informal; therefore, teaching is not improving.
- The curriculum offered to pupils is too narrow and limits their development. There is little evidence to show that pupils are given the opportunity to experience cultural differences in their everyday lives. Nor do they appear to be open to the views of those who might have different beliefs than those offered by church members. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to learn about and consider the lives of those who have a different religious faith or no faith. This limits pupils' development socially and culturally. The particular Christian philosophy that underpins the curriculum means there are strengths in the promotion of pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Leaders' interpretations of the scriptures lead them to teach pupils to be obedient, but pupils do not get the opportunity to have enough voice in their own education. Pupils do not experience a balance of differing views on certain matters including the 'protected characteristics' (for example, relating to: age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, sexual orientation) of the Equality Act 2010. This all means that they are insufficiently prepared for life in modern Britain. This also means that leaders have not effectively promoted all forms of equality and have not taken sufficient note of the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Therefore the school is not fulfilling its legal requirements.
- Leaders have not done enough to address the limited opportunities of the curriculum on offer. For example, students in Key Stage 4 do not get the opportunity to learn drama, dance, music, technology or art during school time. This is because the school does not have access to staff who can teach the children to the level that is needed. School sport is poorly promoted. This is because the school does not have the resources to give the pupils the experiences they need. There are no opportunities for pupils to compete or collaborate with other schools.
- Leaders recognise the limitations of what they are trying to achieve at the school. For example, they know that the curriculum is too restricted. They do not, however, recognise the impact this is having on pupils' outcomes, because they are too focused on the results pupils achieve in their GCSEs. Leaders have not recognised that the narrowness of the curriculum does not give equal opportunity to pupils who may excel in other areas, for example the arts.
- Those who work with and for the school, most of whom are parents, share the aims and ethos developed by governors and leaders. As such, the school facilitates the opportunity for parents to teach their own children within the communal setting of the school. Consequently, the school works closely with parents, who hold the school in high esteem. They value the contribution made by the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school**

- Governance at the school is weak and ineffective. Processes to monitor the effectiveness of provision are too informal. For example, many members of the governing body are also parents of pupils at the school. This means that they are not always able to take a dispassionate view of the quality of provision on offer. As a result, governors do not hold leaders sufficiently to account for the implementation and impact of policies that they set. They have not ensured that there are rigorous systems for the management of staff performance.
- Governors do not systematically check information about how well pupils are learning. This means that they do not know where improvements are needed. They rely too heavily on their own experience and anecdotal evidence when evaluating the quality of provision at the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective because leaders have not ensured that policies are implemented effectively. Work has been undertaken to address this, including receiving advice from the safeguarding advisor for Surrey County Council. Nevertheless, although improvements have been made, policies and processes are not secure enough to protect pupils from potential harm.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Teaching across the school varies widely in quality and often does not help pupils to learn quickly enough. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills adequately.
- Parents and church members, on whom the school relies for a significant portion of teaching and who share the teaching of classes across each week, show insufficient ability to adjust lessons as they progress so as to ensure maximum progress and respond to any slackening of the pace of learning.
- Teachers do not always have the skills and experience needed to be effective. Their use of questioning is, in the main, underdeveloped and so they do not help pupils to deepen their understanding of the concepts they want them to learn.
- Teachers, typically, do not use assessment information effectively in lessons and over time. They are not aware enough of what their pupils can do and what they already know. Work set is not consistently at the right level to challenge pupils and meet their differing needs.
- Teachers do not track how well pupils are doing over time. This means that they do not know if pupils are making sufficient progress, or when they might need extra support to catch up.
- Too often, the needs of different groups of pupils are not adequately met. This is affected by the poor use of assessment, the limited experience, skills and expectations of staff. This means that planning does not take enough account of the most able, the disabled or those with special educational needs.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate**

#### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. In particular, leaders have not taken effective action to ensure that health and safety requirements are met. Electrical work is carried out by unqualified people and results in the school using uncertificated appliances. Risk assessments are not completed accurately or in sufficient detail. This means there are unidentified risks in the use of the buildings and in the functioning of the school.
- The premises are not maintained to the required standard. For example, the main fire exit onto the courtyard at the school does not shut properly. The premises are not secured against uninvited visitors.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to make positive contributions to the life of the school or to the wider community. School leaders have rightly recognised that more should be done to give pupils a voice and enable them to make a contribution to the development of the school. Actions to this end, however, have been slow to materialise, and as yet pupils have no forum through which to express their views.
- Pupils develop a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and when engaged in activities that are similar to those they experience in everyday life. They are also aware of the different forms of bullying. However, they do not always take enough responsibility for their own safety because it is seen as the adults' responsibility. This limits pupils' ability to assess risk for themselves.
- Pupils believe that they are given a limited view of the world. They do not get sufficient opportunity to explore the points of view and perspectives of those from differing backgrounds.

- Pupils say they feel safe at school and that rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. Parents hold the school in very high regard and believe their children are well cared for.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The school's behaviour policy is not consistently and effectively implemented.
- Not all staff have the skills required to manage the occasional instances of disruptive behaviour in class or, more rarely, at social times. This means that pupils are not always managed well in lessons, and the behaviour of some pupils prevents others from making as much progress as they could.
- Some pupils have developed the habits of working by themselves so thoroughly that they resist teachers' attempts to engage them in dialogue during lessons. This slows progress and undermines the development of a positive ethos in the classroom.
- Where there are low levels of challenge and expectation, a lack of interest in much of the work set results in unenthusiastic engagement, leading to poor work production and presentation. This is not challenged by teachers.
- Most pupils have learnt to be obedient, but this has led to over-compliance and passiveness. Most pupils behave well at breaktimes and other social occasions. The relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are generally positive.
- Leaders do not sufficiently check trends in behaviour. They are not able, therefore, to assess the effectiveness of what they do to improve the behaviour of pupils over the longer term.
- There have been no exclusions at the school over the last three years.
- Many pupils attend well. They arrive on time and well prepared with all they need for their lessons.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **are inadequate**

- Pupils do not achieve well enough in a broad range of subjects over time. In particular, opportunities to develop confident and skilled speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are underdeveloped.
- Work in books is often of a poor standard with too little opportunity for pupils to write at length and to apply their skills. The quality of pupils' work and their achievement closely reflects the limiting impact of the school's approach to teaching and learning, and the curriculum on offer for the pupils.
- Lessons do not routinely engender pupils' interest or commitment. Typically, pupils are not set tasks that provide real stretch and challenge. Consequently, pupils regularly do not complete work to the standard that they could. The staff's low expectations mean pupils do not make sufficient progress in lessons.
- Pupils' limited experiences of school sport, art, design and technology, music and information technology mean their opportunities to achieve well in these subjects is very limited. Pupils themselves believe there is a lack of cultural and social opportunities and, rightly, that this limits their development in these areas.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs are not appropriately identified, and so leaders cannot be sure if these pupils have their needs met effectively or make as much progress as they could. Similarly, most-able pupils are not consistently challenged by their teachers. Consequently, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils generally learn better in mathematics and science than they do in reading and writing. Pupils are taught to read effectively when they are in Years 1 and 2. This is because a useful systematic programme for learning phonics (the sounds that letters make) has been developed in the school. However, as pupils go through the school they are not challenged well enough to deepen and broaden their reading abilities. Those who find reading more difficult are insufficiently supported once they leave the infant class.
- Preparation of pupils for academic qualifications in the upper school is a relative strength. GCSE results have been consistently high. Pupils typically leave the school with five or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English and mathematics. However, the range of qualifications that pupils can take at GCSE is too restricted.
- Pupils receive limited careers advice. They only go on work experience if it has been arranged by their parents. Consequently, pupils are not systematically prepared for the world of work. Those wishing to pursue careers, such as in the creative industries, do not leave school suitably equipped to do so.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125438
<b>Inspection number</b>	10007694
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/6558

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Christian
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	37
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	4
<b>Proprietor</b>	Epsom Christian Fellowship
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Dr M Houghton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G Davies
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£600
<b>Telephone number</b>	01372 742940
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cornerstoneschool.org.uk">www.cornerstoneschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@cornerstoneschool.org.uk">admin@cornerstoneschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	May 2008

## Information about this school

- The Cornerstone School is an independent Christian co-educational school which opened in September 1988. There are currently 37 pupils on roll aged from five to 16 years of age, four of whom attend part time.
- The school shares its accommodation with the Epsom Christian Fellowship church.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, and none is in the care of the local authority.
- There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.  
The school makes use of a range of local facilities to deliver its sports and physical education curriculum. No alternative provision is used by secondary aged pupils.
- The school was last inspected by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate for a full inspection in June 2011 and for a one-day inspection in May 2014.
- The school's vision is for 'a place with an atmosphere full of the love and wisdom of God'. Leaders aim to educate pupils through a curriculum based on Christian teachings. Parents, together with church members, work voluntarily as teachers to make this aim possible.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice. The inspectors observed learning in nine lessons, three jointly with the headteacher. The inspectors looked at the work of pupils and discussed it with them. They held meetings with the headteacher, governors and members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked at documentation, including procedures to ensure pupils are safe, policy statements, schemes of work, teachers' planning and minutes of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered the response of 15 parents who had completed Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire. They also met with parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection. The questionnaire responses from 23 staff were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sian Thornton

Her Majesty's Inspector



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