

Maranatha Christian School

Queenlaines Farm, Sevenhampton, Highworth, Swindon, Wiltshire SN6 7SQ

Inspection dates

18–20 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leadership and management are inadequate because the trustees have not ensured that the independent school standards are met in full.
- Leaders have not ensured that they have systems in place to identify and manage risk, placing pupils in potential danger.
- The trustees do not have clear roles and responsibilities. Consequently, they do not challenge school leaders effectively to improve the school and ensure that all standards relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety are met.
- Leaders have been too slow to address the weaknesses identified in the school's performance, significantly slowing the pace of improvement.
- The provision for the school's youngest children is inadequate because the planning for learning is weak. Leaders do not ensure that these children's safety and welfare are promoted effectively.
- Staff do not receive the effective training and guidance they need to improve their work. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, particularly in writing.
- Teachers do not consistently plan lessons which build on pupils' previous learning. In some lessons, pupils complete the same work, regardless of their age or ability.
- The school has not identified how it will provide feedback to pupils to help them improve their learning.
- Leaders do not check the quality of teaching and learning with sufficient depth and rigour. The school's current systems for holding teachers to account for pupils' progress are underdeveloped.
- The capacity for further improvement is weak because the headteacher does not have other leaders who have the skills to support him in improving the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well and are unfailingly courteous and polite. They respect one another and the adults who work with them.
- The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school's distinctive Christian ethos is at the heart of the school's work.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are positive about the education they receive. As a result, their attendance is good.
- Staff foster British values well. Pupils learn to debate current topics and form their own views.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality and effectiveness of the school's policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and to promote their welfare, health and safety by:
 - establishing clear roles and responsibilities to ensure that trustees and leaders understand their part in implementing and monitoring the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe
 - drawing up and implementing effective risk assessments relating to pupils' safety, securing the school site and for off-site visits
 - ensuring that all fire regulations are rigorously checked and urgent action taken when risks are identified
 - putting in place comprehensive systems to ensure that trustees and leaders check that all risks are promptly identified and that actions taken are swiftly implemented.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - leaders focus on building the capacity and skills of other staff so that they can support the headteacher in improving the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils
 - the school's improvement plans include precisely focused targets with clear timescales so that leaders and trustees can frequently and rigorously check the impact of their actions
 - leaders and trustees hold staff to account for improving the pupils' academic achievement and personal development.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - staff receive high-quality training to enable them to develop their skills in planning and delivering lessons which effectively meet the needs of pupils
 - teachers' planning and the work set is based on their assessments of what pupils know, can do and understand
 - staff implement agreed approaches to improve the quality of pupils' writing
 - staff agree on and implement the school's approach to providing high-quality questioning and feedback to help pupils understand how to improve their learning further.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - Ensure that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2), is drawn up and implemented effectively (paragraphs 2(1) and 2(1)(a)).
 - Ensure that the written policy, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care plan (paragraphs 2(1)(b) and 2(1)(b)(i)).
 - Ensure that the teaching at the school is effective (paragraph 3).

- Ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a)).
- Ensure that the teaching at the school involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3(c)).
- Ensure that the teaching at the school shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- The proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor must ensure that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks and that pupils are kept safe from harm (paragraphs 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraphs 17 and 18(2)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that each member of staff appointed after 1 May 2007 is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (paragraphs 21(3) and 21(3)(a)(iii)).
- The proprietor must check each member of staff to establish whether the member of staff is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which the check was completed (paragraph 23(1) and 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23(1)(c)).
- Ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils (paragraph 24(1)).
- Ensure suitable accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils, including the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraphs 24(1)(a) and 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor should ensure that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfil their responsibilities effectively, consistently meet the independent school standards, and

actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The trustees do not have an in-depth understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards. As a result, leaders are not effectively implementing arrangements for safeguarding pupils and for promoting their welfare, health and safety. Standards are not met in full.
- Leaders have not tackled risks to pupils' safety with the urgency required. Risk assessments are either not in place or are not effective. For example, those relating to off-site activities, including swimming, are out of date and relate to pupils who attended the school some years ago. Health and safety checks lack rigour. The inspector found checks to ensure suitability of staff were not completed in full. This is placing pupils in potential danger.
- The trustees have not tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection with the necessary rigour and urgency. In particular, provision for the school's youngest children is weak. Also, leaders have not ensured that these pupils are safe and secure.
- Leaders have not provided the training and guidance teachers need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The capacity for further improvement is compromised because too much rests with the headteacher. He is currently involved in overseeing all aspects of welfare, health and safety as well as improving pupils' academic achievement. Other staff have yet to develop the necessary skills to support the headteacher effectively in this work. This has a negative impact on pupils' academic achievement as well as their welfare, health and safety.
- The school has systems in place for managing staff performance. However, the targets leaders set for teachers do not link tightly to improving pupils' learning and progress. Trustees do not frequently check that the quality of teaching is improving and where further improvements are required. In addition, leaders rely on the detailed assessment information gathered from the completion of pupils' individualised Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) work. Leaders are not carefully checking pupils' learning for themselves by other means, for example by evaluating progress in pupils' books.
- The school's development plans do not focus sharply on the identified areas for improvement. These plans lack precise intended outcomes and timescales for action. As a result, leaders are not able to check the impact of their actions on improving safeguarding arrangements and pupils' learning. This has slowed the school's improvement since the previous inspection.
- Staff provide highly individualised support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that they make good progress from their starting points, particularly with their ACE work. However, specific and individual targets set by staff to promote these pupils' academic and personal development lack precise and measurable criteria by which to monitor their progress.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum, enabling them to achieve the International Certificate of Christian Education when they leave the school. They learn about a range of subjects, including science, Spanish and apologetics (the skills to debate). Staff encourage pupils to form their own views, for example reflecting on the Christian concept of creationism. They develop impressive skills in presenting chosen topics of interest, such as Islam, to their peers. Resources in the library

include many books about different religions and cultures to support pupils' understanding of other religious faiths. In addition, British values are promoted well. In discussions, pupils demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the rule of law and this country's democratic systems. Pupils show respect for those from other cultures, religions and those who hold different views to their own.

- The school's Christian ethos is embraced by all pupils, staff and parents. 'This school is like one big family' was a comment frequently heard by the inspector. Leaders promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, pupils are encouraged to lead the music in the daily assembly. These occasions make a very positive contribution in bringing the whole school community together.
- The school offers suitable careers advice to pupils as they move towards making decisions about the next stage of their education. Although in the past most stayed on at the school until the age of 19, this is currently not the case. The school supports pupils in making appropriate choices. This helps them to continue in education past the age of 16.

Governance

- Trustees have not ensured that the independent school standards are met, particularly those relating to safeguarding and pupils' welfare, health and safety. This is because they do not have a thorough and detailed understanding of their role in setting and monitoring the school's strategic direction and ensuring that these standards are met. In addition, their roles and responsibilities are not clear. As a result, leaders have taken insufficient action to identify and reduce risk.
- All members of the trust are committed to the further improvement of the school. As parents of children that currently attend the school, they have a deep investment in seeing the school flourish. However, although they have the skills to make strategic decisions about the use of tight finances, they are less secure in challenging the headteacher to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This lack of challenge has resulted in areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection still not being effectively addressed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are inadequate.
- Trustees do not ensure that policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and promote their welfare, health and safety are implemented effectively. They do not check that identified risks are quickly and rigorously reduced to keep pupils safe.
- The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents. However, there is no reference to the most recent government guidance. In addition, at the start of the inspection, important checks on the suitability of staff working at the school had not been completed. This has now been put right.
- All staff receive training in child protection to enable them to recognise signs of risk or harm. This training includes information on how to identify pupils at risk from radicalisation or child sexual exploitation. Nonetheless, the school's safeguarding culture is weak.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. This is because not all teachers have the skills to plan work which builds on what pupils already know, can do and understand. In addition, staff do not plan precisely which skills the pupils will be learning and the criteria for assessing their progress in acquiring these skills.

As a result, the work set does not match pupils' needs closely enough. This is not helping them to make consistently good progress.

- In the morning sessions, pupils follow a highly individualised and structured ACE programme. Pupils self-assess their work and teachers provide appropriate guidance and support. However, the work completed in these sessions confirms that teachers do not always stretch and challenge pupils' thinking and learning. This is hindering the progress some pupils make.
- Teachers do not focus on improving pupils' writing well enough. There is no agreed approach to improving the quality of writing or to provide feedback to help pupils know how to improve their work. In some lessons, pupils choose to take notes in their own notebooks. In others, pupils write at length, producing work of a high quality. Work in pupils' books confirms that teachers do not always correct common mistakes, such as basic punctuation errors. The quality of handwriting and presentation is especially variable. Consequently, teachers do not ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.
- The most able pupils achieve the International Certificate of Christian Education, often at the higher level, when they leave the school. However, teachers do not always expect enough from this group of pupils, particularly in their writing. Work in books across age ranges and subjects confirms that some pupils do not consistently produce written work at the standard expected for their age. In addition, children in the early years are not appropriately challenged, resulting in slower progress over their time in the school.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, particularly in the morning sessions. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. As a result, pupils are keen to succeed. They set themselves aspirational targets to achieve personal goals. Pupils sit regular tests to check their understanding and learning. This approach is successful in supporting pupils to be self-motivated and resilient learners.
- Pupils use the skills that they learn in the morning sessions to support their learning in the afternoon. For example, pupils successfully used their mathematical skills in science to measure the growth of plants. Older pupils researched other faiths using their information, communication and technology (ICT) skills. This is supporting pupils to develop their English and mathematical skills further.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils quickly learn the skills they need to access the text in their workbooks. In addition, they read for pleasure and make good use of the wide range of books available in the library.
- Teachers provide homework regularly, often to successfully complement the work completed in the morning sessions. Teachers make sure those pupils who attend part time are completing work books at an appropriate pace. They check and record their learning systematically to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils are safe because there are shortcomings in the

school's safeguarding arrangements and in the recording and implementation of risk assessments. This is having a negative impact on pupils' welfare, health and safety.

- Leaders did not act on the fire risk assessment carried out in December 2015 with the urgency and rigour required. The trustees have been slow to check that the number of serious shortcomings highlighted in the report have been rectified to ensure that pupils are safe in school.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. Furthermore, pupils are confident that staff deal with any concerns immediately. As a result, they are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. Comments such as, 'I love it here. It has changed my life' are typical of those heard by the inspector.
- The school teaches pupils to stay safe when using the internet. Staff monitor the use of computers for personal study so that pupils are not put at risk.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to others, visitors and to the staff. The strong 'family feel' supports pupils effectively to enjoy school and attend regularly. Pupils are keen to come to school and be with their friends. They say the school equips them successfully to move to the next stage of their education.
- Parents and staff hold the school in high regard. The inspector observed no incidences of poor behaviour during the inspection. The incident behaviour records confirm pupils typically behave well, both in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. The school is a happy and harmonious community.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too variable across the curriculum and age ranges. Teachers' planning of work does not sufficiently take account of pupils' individual needs, specifically in the afternoon sessions. In addition, the quality of pupils' writing is inconsistent across a range of subjects because the school has not yet agreed a whole-school approach to the teaching of this subject. This is not supporting pupils well enough for them to make consistently good progress.
- Work in books confirms that pupils build their mathematical skills steadily over time. They develop perseverance and strong attitudes to learning to enable them to tackle increasingly complex work, for example fractions and algebra. However, on occasion, pupils complete lists of calculations incorrectly before seeking the support that they need. Supervisors have good mathematical subject knowledge. Nonetheless, they do not always check that pupils are secure in their understanding of the mathematical concepts being tackled, limiting the progress pupils make.
- Teachers encourage the most able pupils to discuss and research complex subjects such as 'rhetorical forms' and apply their thinking to current issues. Such discussion is of a high quality. Nonetheless, pupils do not always receive the feedback that they need to improve their work. This is not supporting them to make the best possible progress.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities work at their own pace in their ACE programme, receiving individual support when required. However, work in other subjects is not always suitably planned to meet their specific needs. As a result,

pupils' completed work is not always of the highest quality possible, limiting the progress these pupils make.

- Pupils learn to read with fluency and comprehension and make good progress. This enables them to tackle the tasks in their workbooks with confidence. The most able readers read complex vocabulary with fluency and a good understanding of the text. In addition, pupils develop the confidence to read their scriptures out loud, with expression and clarity.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Bible history is strong. They develop a very strong religious faith and the confidence to discuss their views in the knowledge these views will be respected. As a result, pupils become confident and assured young people.
- Pupils leave the school having achieved an International Certificate of Christian Education. They are equipped to successfully transfer to their chosen post-16 destination. All pupils who left the school in July 2016 now attend appropriate further education provision.
- During the inspection, the inspector observed pupils confidently using online resources to support the teaching of Spanish and French. They were able to answer questions fluently and with expression and understanding. Pupils who choose these subjects as part of their qualification make good progress in modern foreign languages.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Trustees have not ensured that the safeguarding arrangements for the youngest children are effective. The same failings in safeguarding practice and procedures in the main school are evident in the early years. This has a negative impact on children's welfare, health and safety. Consequently leadership and management of this provision are inadequate.
- When children start school, staff check their starting points and use this information to plan activities to meet children's individual needs. The quality of teaching for the pre-school children is effective. Children settle quickly and staff build strong relationships with parents. Staff use the home-school communication book effectively to ensure that the transition to school is smooth. Parents praise the work of the staff, stating that their children make rapid progress in their learning and self-confidence. As a result, children make good progress, particularly in communication and personal and social development. They learn to be independent learners and to take turns and share with one another.
- Pupils move to the ABC class when staff assess that they are ready to learn to read. The early gains children make in their first year of school stall because teaching is not closely matched to the children's needs. This is particularly the case during times when they are working with the teacher. Children's learning in their workbooks is more effective and supports pupils to learn early literacy and number skills. Nonetheless, the staff have not received the training and guidance that they need to ensure that children learn effectively in this class.
- The pre-school indoor learning environment is well resourced and supports children to develop skills and understanding in most areas of learning. However, the outdoor garden does not provide opportunities for children in pre-school and the ABC class to learn and to explore their environment.

- Staff do not consistently plan lessons which challenge children sufficiently, in particular the most able children. Consequently, children do not concentrate on the task as well as they could. Behaviour is not always good enough and staff do not ensure that all children behave safely. Not all children are as well prepared as they need to be to start in the next class.

School details

Unique reference number	126536
DfE registration number	866/6001
Inspection number	10020791

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
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	11
Proprietor	New Maranatha Christian School Trust
Chair	John Cullis
Headteacher	Paul Medlock
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,674 – £4,496
Telephone number	01793 762075
Website	www.maranathaschool.org
Email address	reception@maranathaschool.org
Date of previous inspection	23–25 October 2013

Information about this school

- Maranatha Christian School is registered as an independent school for 90 boys and girls aged between three and 19. The school is owned by the New Maranatha Christian School Trust.
- The school is located in its own buildings, on the site of a farm in Sevenhampton, near Swindon.
- Pupils are taught in five classes, known as learning centres.
- There are 53 pupils on roll, of which seven are part time. In addition, four pre-school children attend part time.
- There were no students in the sixth form at the time of the inspection.

- The school provides education based on 'Biblical foundations and Christian principles'. Pupils use the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) materials during the morning, which are highly individualised. In the afternoons, pupils work on a range of subjects across the curriculum.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The board of trustees has responsibility for the governance of the school.
- The school was last inspected in October 2013, when it met all independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons or parts of lessons, taught by teachers, known as supervisors. In addition, the inspector looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and information kept by the school about pupils' learning and progress.
- The inspector spoke with pupils throughout the inspection, and at break and lunchtimes, to seek their views about the school. She also spoke with parents at different times during the inspection.
- The inspector held meetings with the chair of the trustees, the headteacher and teaching staff. In addition, the inspector spoke to a trustee by telephone. She scrutinised schemes of learning and lesson plans provided by the school.
- The inspector scrutinised records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. A recent fire regulations check report was also scrutinised and discussed with school leaders. School policies and school documentation were also examined. In addition, the inspector undertook an extensive tour of the school site.
- The inspector took account of 10 staff questionnaires and 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. In addition, the inspector took account of 17 messages received by Ofsted's text messaging system.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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