

Greater Grace School of Christian Education

Church Lane, Backford, Chester, Cheshire CH2 4BE

Inspection dates

3 October 2017

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- At the time of the last inspection the school's safeguarding policy was out of date and did not make reference to the most up-to-date guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Staff had not received appropriate training on key aspects of safeguarding such as 'Prevent' and the school's relationship with the local authority over safeguarding matters was not strong enough.
- In the action plan submitted to the Department for Education (DfE), the proprietor did not provide evidence that staff had accessed suitable training in order to update their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding. Leaders' plans for safeguarding to feature as a standard agenda item at staff meetings were unclear as to the purpose or intended impact of this action. The action plan also failed to make clear how leaders intended to improve links with the local authority.
- Leaders have ensured that the safeguarding culture within the school has been significantly strengthened since the previous inspection. Staff and trustees have accessed safeguarding training at an appropriate level and consequently now have a secure understanding of good safeguarding practice, including 'Prevent'. Trustees say that their training has made them realise that safeguarding issues 'can happen anywhere' and they now recognise the need to be vigilant at all times.
- The school's safeguarding policy, which is available on the school website, is now up to date and refers to the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Staff have a good understanding of the policy and so now know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being. They also have a good awareness of the warning signs that may alert them to potential issues.
- Leaders have successfully established much closer links with the local authority and other agencies. The safeguarding policy that leaders have put in place is drawn from the local authority's best-practice guidance. Some of the safeguarding training accessed by staff and trustees was organised and led by members of the local authority's safeguarding team. Staff and some pupils have also benefited from attending training about staying safe on the internet (e-safety).

- Leaders' effective actions in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils at the school, and in complying with current guidance, have ensured that this standard is now met.

Paragraph 11

- This standard was identified as unmet when the school was last inspected. The quality of the premises was described as 'variable' and leaders were not ensuring that the school's policy on health and safety was being followed effectively. The subsequent action plan identified some actions to remedy the identified deficiencies, but was unclear as to how leaders would ensure that effective ongoing checks were carried out.
- The school now has a detailed and robust policy document on health and safety, and leaders have established a programme of ongoing maintenance to ensure that the premises are fit for purpose. In addition to routine maintenance being carried out, improvements to specific areas of concern identified by the last inspection have been carried out. For example, electrical distribution boards have been securely boxed in to ensure that pupils are not able to accidentally touch them, and the external fencing around the site has been repaired. Leaders, including trustees, are now more vigilant when thinking about health and safety, and ensure that the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for health and safety is discussed and evaluated regularly.
- The school's written health and safety policy is implemented effectively, and this standard is now met.

Paragraphs 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection this standard was identified as unmet because the school's approach to assessing and managing risk was not strong enough. Risks to pupils, such as from poorly maintained premises and grounds, were not robustly identified and measures were not routinely taken to swiftly tackle any such risks.
- The action plan submitted to the DfE recognised weaknesses in the school's approach and identified a number of potential risks, and strategies to address them. However, school leaders did not submit any evidence to illustrate the impact of any actions taken, nor did they submit a risk assessment policy.
- School leaders' approach to managing potential risks has improved. In the school building and grounds, potential risks are identified and addressed through a well-organised schedule of risk assessments and planned maintenance. As a result, the school premises provide pupils with a suitably safe and secure learning environment. Leaders have also ensured that detailed risk assessments are in place for activities away from the school site, such as educational visits and physical education sessions held at local sports facilities. Appropriate action is therefore being taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- This standard is not met, though, because leaders have not put in place a written risk assessment policy. The headteacher now appreciates the need to have such a policy in place and plans are now in place to develop an appropriate policy.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(c)

- This standard was not met when the school was last inspected because the school did

not have suitable changing accommodation or showers in place for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.

- The action plan submitted to the DfE indicated that leaders had identified a potential location for the installation of showering facilities and were exploring the likely costs.
- Leaders have fully costed plans in place to install a shower in school but have not yet identified a likely date for completion of this work. However, they have ensured that pupils now have access to a good range of physical education and sporting activities, including badminton, tennis, football and athletics, by delivering sessions at local sports centres and clubs. These venues have appropriate changing and showering facilities. Leaders have ensured that suitable risk assessments are in place so that any potential risks of using off-site facilities are identified and suitably addressed. Pupils are therefore not disadvantaged by the lack of changing and showering facilities at the school.
- However, this standard about the premises and accommodation at the school is not met because there are currently no suitable changing and showering facilities at school.

Paragraphs 24, 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)

- At the time of the last inspection this standard was identified as not met because there was no suitable accommodation in school to cater for pupils' medical needs. In the school's subsequent action plan, leaders had identified two rooms to be used when pupils require medical attention. However, it was unclear from the action plan whether these rooms would be suitable and comply with the requirements of the standard.
- Leaders have made adaptations to a cloakroom area so that it provides a suitable space for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils. A fold-out bed is available and the room has both toilet and washing facilities. It is also situated close to both classrooms and the main entrance to school for ease of access.
- A second room, closer to the playground, has been identified as being suitable for the examination and treatment of sick or injured pupils. The room is used as an occasional activity space by pupils, and is adjacent to the junior classroom. The door into the classroom can be shut to ensure privacy but also allows any pupils using the room to join others in the junior classroom safely and with minimal disruption.
- Leaders have thus ensured that there is suitable accommodation to cater for pupils' immediate medical needs, and to care for sick or injured pupils on a short-term basis. This standard is now met.

Paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(b)

- The inspection in October 2016 found that this standard was not met as there were a number of hazards relating to the school's playground that meant it was not a suitably safe space for pupils to play outside. The report noted that 'good-quality, routine maintenance has not been sustained.' Leaders submitted a premises plan as part of their action plan to detail how they intended to remedy issues with the outdoor play space but did not submit evidence of the impact of any actions taken.
- The outdoor space available to pupils, including a small playground and garden area, has been transformed. Leaders have ensured that the previously broken wire fence has been repaired and gaps to neighbouring properties fenced. As a result, the site is now secure and the fence does not present a safety hazard. It is clear that regular maintenance is being undertaken and the site is now free from potentially dangerous debris.

- Pupils enjoy using the outdoor areas. During the inspection pupils played football enthusiastically on the playground and told me that they were looking forward to using the basketball hoops for another game. Other pupils sat and chatted happily in the garden area.
- The outdoor space at school is safe and suitable for pupils to play outside, and so this standard is met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- This standard was unmet at the previous inspection. Weaknesses in the effectiveness of leadership and management meant that the school failed to meet a significant number of the independent school standards. The report also stated that trustees had limited capacity to ensure that the necessary improvements were made and standards met. The subsequent action plan addressed some of these issues but did not provide sufficient detail as to how leaders and trustees intended to monitor the impact of their actions.
- Those responsible for the leadership and management of the school, including the trustees, have substantially increased their knowledge and understanding of their different roles and their responsibilities in ensuring that the school meets the independent school standards. They have accessed well-chosen training and put policies and procedures in place which have enabled the school to meet a number of standards that were previously unmet.
- Central to these improvements has been the drive of the headteacher and the increased participation of the trustees in moving the school forward. As one trustee explained, they now recognise that their role is 'much more than simply balancing the books'. Trustees now meet together typically half-termly. Evidence gathered from discussions with trustees and minutes of their meetings confirm that they are providing the headteacher with a more effective balance of support and challenge. The work of leaders and trustees has secured improvements in the quality of the school premises and accommodation, arrangements for health and safety and safeguarding and links with other bodies. They are actively promoting pupils' well-being.
- Leaders are not, however, wholly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities because some of the independent school standards are still not met. Consequently, this standard is not met. Leaders are aware of those standards that remain unmet and are actively seeking to take further action to ensure that the school complies with those standards as well.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that the school meets the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet at this inspection

- The proprietor must 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 (paragraphs 16, 16(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraphs 23(1), 23(1)(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- 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), 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 that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraph 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable pupils to play outside (paragraphs 29(1), 29(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	131791
DfE registration number	896/6027
Inspection number	10040244

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	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Trustees of Greater Grace School of Christian Education
Chair	Alastair Craddock
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Mulligan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,772
Telephone number	01244 851797
Website	www.wix.com/greatergraceschool/ggs
Email address	greatergraces@gmail.com
Date of previous standard inspection	18–20 October 2016

Information about this school

- Greater Grace School of Christian Education is situated in a small village near Chester.
- The school is registered to admit 14 pupils aged from five to 18 years. There are currently six pupils on roll, aged between six and 16 years. Pupils are taught in two classes, one for pupils of primary age and one for the older pupils.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school states its desire 'to serve the Body of Christ by complementing the parental responsibility to "train up a child in the way he should go".'
- As a condition of pupil admission, at least one parent must be a 'born-again' Christian and regularly attend their own local church.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection following the school's previous standard inspection in October 2016.
- The DfE rejected the school's action plan following the previous inspection.
- The inspection was conducted without notice to the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher and one of the trustees. The inspector also had telephone conversations with two of the other trustees, including the chair. The inspector toured the school and visited both classes. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils and scrutinised a range of relevant policies and documentation. The single central record was checked and safeguarding policies and procedures were reviewed.

Inspection team

Neil Dixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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