

Christian Fellowship School

Overbury Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool, Merseyside L7 3HL

Inspection dates

21–23 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders are reflective and have high aspirations. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Middle leadership and subject leadership have been strengthened. Clear lines of accountability have been established. However, subject leaders' skills in evaluating the impact of their actions on pupils' learning are still developing.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They use their good subject knowledge to design interesting and engaging learning activities.
- By the time pupils leave the school, they make good progress from their starting points. They achieve well in a wide range of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and inquisitive. Pupils are well prepared to be positive global citizens and their behaviours embody the school's Christian ethos.
- Safeguarding and pastoral welfare are at the heart of the school. Well-trained staff are vigilant in protecting pupils from risks.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. The curriculum's design allows pupils to make appropriate choices in their learning that reflect their interests and talents. However, in the lower school, for subjects other than English and mathematics, the progression of learning is sometimes disjointed and superficial.
- The early years is an exciting and caring place in which children enjoy their learning and make good progress. Teachers sometimes do not make best use of the extensive school grounds for outdoor learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Opportunities for pupils to develop personally abound in the school. These include leadership roles, cultural, academic and pastoral experiences from within the local community and overseas visits.
- Parents and carers share their children's pride in the school and unequivocally support the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2015 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders responsible for subjects build on their developing skills and become confident and consistent in their use of assessment information to evaluate how well their actions improve pupils' learning and progress.
- Enhance the curriculum in the early years by further developing the use of the outdoors to promote learning.
- Improve teaching and learning in the lower school by refining the planned progression of knowledge and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietors and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have a clear vision to provide an excellent education for the pupils who attend the Christian Fellowship School. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of their regular checks and detailed analysis of the school's performance. They are reflective and make effective use of their findings to identify appropriate priorities for development, which they include in their development planning.
- Leaders have taken effective actions to strengthen the leadership and management of the school, particularly in the tiers of leadership and management below the senior leadership team. New appointments of a 'head of lower school' and a 'head of middle school', accompanied by the appointments of 'assistant heads' of lower, middle and upper school, have established clear lines of accountability. The development of the role of subject leaders is well under way. As a result, subject leaders now play a greater role in monitoring the quality of education in their areas of responsibility. However, the use of assessment information by subject leaders to evaluate the impact of their actions is still developing and not as proficient as that of senior leaders.
- Leaders ensure that they meet the requirements to provide information for parents and others on request, including those relating to the school website. Detailed annual reports keep parents well informed about their children's attainment, progress, attendance and attitudes to learning. These are further supplemented by other detailed in-year progress reports. The school's knowledgeable and experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides detailed and effective contributions to ensure the effective review and planning of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Information, advice and guidance relating to careers education meet the standards required by the independent school standards. Pupils receive regular advice about possible future careers and choices of education opportunities. This is delivered in an impartial manner by external local and national consultants. Careers advice includes coverage of possible apprenticeship routes, including degree apprenticeships. As a result, pupils are well prepared to make informed choices about their future education, employment and training.
- There were 106 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no negative responses. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. This is exemplified in comments such as 'We have found CFS to be a safe, nurturing environment for our children', 'Our children are not only receiving a good education, they are becoming well-rounded, conscientious and compassionate young people' and 'absolutely thrilled with the school'.
- This is a caring school that effectively instils in its pupils a secure understanding of the fundamental values of British society. Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding strongly through a wide range of activities. These include carefully considered links to other schools and communities in Europe and Africa, the study of a

wide range of different faiths and the strong promotion of the school's Christian ethos.

- Teachers value the continuing professional development that leaders provide. This includes opportunities to visit other schools, including those in the maintained sector, and to attend local authority and examination board training events. As a result of these training opportunities, leaders have made effective amendments to the way in which reading, writing and mathematics are taught in the school. These changes have ensured that learning is carefully sequenced in these subjects, particularly in the lower and middle school, to promote pupils' learning at greater depth and ensure that most-able pupils receive appropriate levels of challenge.
- Pupils participate in a range of on-site and off-site physical education (PE) activities. These include opportunities to undertake adventurous activities in the outdoors when on residential visits. Older pupils undertake their PE off-site to ensure that there are suitable showering facilities. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure that any risks associated with this are mitigated. Swimming is an important focus of the school's PE curriculum. This includes the promotion of swimming skills in the early years through frequent visits to the local pool for swimming lessons.
- Leaders keep up-to-date records and logs of events in the school, including those that record serious incidents relating to pupils' behaviours. These logs record incidents and their outcomes in detail. Senior leaders and the proprietors effectively monitor and evaluate this information to identify any emerging trends or reasons for their occurrence.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It exceeds the minimum requirements in the independent school standards. The curriculum provides pupils with a rich learning experience. Older pupils in the upper school are able to follow their interests and build upon their talents. This is because leaders provide flexibility in the choice of learning by sourcing appropriate teachers and trainers to deliver courses that are of interest to pupils and that reflect their talents. As a result, older pupils have been able to study performing arts and can gain qualifications in languages such as Chinese alongside the core GCSE curriculum that includes opportunities to study individual sciences.
- In middle and lower school, similar breadth to the curriculum is in place. However, in the lower school in the year groups beyond the early years, the design of the progression of learning is not strong in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, pupils sometimes spend too little time on some topics to allow them to systematically build a deep understanding of the subject being studied. Additionally, the lack of cohesion between the lower and middle schools' curriculum sometimes results in pupils repeating learning unnecessarily in older years.

Governance

- The governance of the school is effective and has ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The governance of the school is undertaken by a board of governors that comprises trustees of the proprietary company, who are known as directors, and other co-opted or elected governors, who are known as nonexecutive directors. They demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to undertake their roles effectively, often drawing upon their professional expertise and wider experiences.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school

because of the quality of information they receive from senior leaders. They frequently check the accuracy of this information through their visits to see the school at work and by inviting other leaders to present information at meetings.

- Governors ask incisive questions of leaders and hold them closely to account for the impact of their actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and trustees have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are followed meticulously. Statutory checks are carried out on the suitability of staff to work with children. The statutory checks on all leaders, proprietors and governors are completed to ensure that they are suitable to hold leadership and management positions in an independent school.
- Leaders have taken appropriate actions to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which pupils can learn. Carefully controlled access ensures that pupils remain safe and secure during their time in school and that parents and the community have appropriate access to engage in school life.
- Well-trained staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. They are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face, including those arising from extremism or the online world. Records are fit for purpose and well kept. Leaders share information with parents and appropriate authorities effectively to ensure pupils' safety.
- The proprietors have ensured that appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection. The proprietors have ensured that the school's safeguarding policy is up to date and published on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and good subject knowledge. This is particularly evident in the teaching of English and art. As a result, teachers confidently pose complex and difficult questions in their subjects and clearly explain the appropriate responses to them. For example, in English in upper school, pupils were challenged to identify the key points within a text that illustrated the author's use of language to identify the main protagonists within the storyline.
- Art is another area of excellence within the school where teachers build upon prior learning to systematically develop pupils' knowledge and skills over time. Teachers swiftly identify pupils' misconception or mistakes and rapidly amend their teaching to address them. As a result, the standards that pupils attain in their art are very high. This is exemplified in the work displayed around the school that illustrates pupils' prowess in a wide range of media, including resin geodes, fabric design and portraits of the human form using a variety of techniques, including the use of Ben-Day dots in the style of Lichtenstein.
- Teaching systematically develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of a wide range of mathematical concepts through a well-planned scheme of work. Most-able pupils receive additional challenges through open-ended problem-solving activities and through

additional mathematics clubs and external mathematics competitions.

- The teaching of reading and writing is good across the school. Pupils get a good start in their development of reading through effective phonics teaching that ensures that they are equipped well to tackle any difficult words that they may encounter. Teachers have amended the way they teach reading to more effectively promote pupils' understanding of comprehension and plot development using whole texts. Writing skills are systematically developed from the outset when children join the school. As a result, the quality of presentation in books is high and pupils' spelling, punctuation and use of English grammar are well developed.
- Teachers make good use of regular homework to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding. They frequently set homework early in the week to ensure that pupils see how their learning in class develops to aid them in completing their homework tasks.
- Teachers typically plan activities to systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in English and mathematics and other subjects in the middle and the upper school. Teachers make good use of a range of up-to-date resources and often use practical experiences to bring learning to life. For example, in the middle school, a group of pupils eagerly and delicately explored the reproductive structures of a plant by carefully dissecting a flower. However, sometimes in the lower school, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics, learning activities are not planned systematically to ensure that pupils develop knowledge and understanding at greater depth.
- Teachers make effective and appropriate use of technology to aid teaching and promote learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive in the school to become confident and dedicated learners because of the high-quality guidance and support they receive. As a result, they are well prepared for their next stages of education. Typically, all pupils continue in education to follow pathways of learning that lead to successful careers in a wide range of occupations. In 2018, all pupils who left the school at the end of the upper school continued in education.
- Pupils exhibit excellent attitudes to learning. They are eager to fully immerse themselves in their studies during teaching activities and demonstrate great respect for their teachers and others in lessons. As a result, disruption to learning at any level is extremely rare.
- Pupils value the excellent guidance they receive about future careers and develop high aspirations for their futures. Pupils speak confidently about what they want to do in their futures. This includes some pupils who wish to study medicine or to become a midwife, while others are inclined to follow a more creative career through performing arts such as professional dance.
- Pupils develop their leadership and social skills well through opportunities to take on leadership roles in school. These include the role of the school councillor. Pupils explained that the school council has brought about changes to the way the school operates. This

includes changes to school uniform and to the way in which lessons are timetabled to allow pupils to go home following off-site PE activities without the need to change. Older pupils habitually and actively engage with younger pupils at breaks to promote play activities with care and sensitivity.

- The personal social and health education programme strongly develops pupils understanding of healthy lifestyles and diversity in an age-appropriate way. Younger pupils develop their understanding of healthy eating through role play and practical activities, such as making vegetable soup. Older pupils look after allotments and share their produce with those less fortunate in the community. Pupils are confident in discussing diversity and the rights of people, including those who have protected characteristics. This is because they have been taught well and developed an appropriate maturity to such matters that reflects the school's faith-based ethos.
- Pupils benefit greatly from the school's close links to local community groups. These strongly develop pupils' understanding of different cultures. For example, pupils enjoy and learn much from discussions with life models in art who come from a wide range of ethnic groups and cultures. Added to this, carefully planned and well-organised work with a neighbouring asylum seekers support organisation strongly develops pupils' understanding of different cultures. These activities develop pupils' moral compass, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils know how to keep safe in school and in the community because of the high-quality teaching they receive from both teachers and visitors, such as the local community police officer. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep safe while using technology because of the effective teaching of online safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally polite and courteous to staff, other adults and each other. They take time to greet and welcome visitors to the school and are eager to share their learning. No examples of inappropriate language or behaviour were observed during the inspection. Any occurrence of poor behaviour is swiftly and effectively dealt with.
- Pupils play harmoniously together at breaktime, irrespective of their age. They often organise themselves well in mixed-gender groups to undertake activities such as long rope skipping, tag style games or football. Vigilant staff supervise playtimes well and actively participate with groups of pupils playing games to further promote social skills. For example, during breaktime, staff promoted collaborative play in football while energetically taking part with a group of younger pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and demonstrate a secure understanding of the different types of bullying, including those related to the protected characteristics, such as homophobic bullying. Pupils found it difficult to recollect or identify acts of bullying and were confident that, if it did occur, staff would swiftly do all they could to prevent it from continuing.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with that of other pupils nationally. Those that spoke with inspectors say they like coming to school and are proud of their school. The few pupils whose attendance is less frequent are absent for good reasons, such as compassionate

leave to attend significant family events abroad or for medical reasons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Many pupils, including children in the early years, enter the school speaking English as an additional language. Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with SEND, make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. All pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education and to become valued citizens in British and global society.
- Pupils in the lower school, including children in the Reception class, get a good start to their education. Pupils quickly develop good basic English and mathematics skills and are well prepared for their transition to the middle school. Work in books shows that pupils make good progress in improving their skills and knowledge in mathematics and English. Pupils systematically develop their writing to an age-appropriate level and have a secure command of English punctuation and spelling. However, work in their books in subjects other than English and mathematics highlights some flaws in how learning is sequenced to promote progression. As a result, pupils sometimes only complete short and superficial studies of some subjects. This limits their development of deeper understanding and knowledge. For example, pupils spent only one day learning about Guy Fawkes before moving on to another unrelated topic about Victorian history relating to Christmas that was then covered again in a later year group.
- In middle school, pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and English continue to be strongly developed. Consequently, work in books is of a high standard and attainment is typically high.
- The more effective planning of the progression of learning in subjects other than English and mathematics enables pupils to systematically develop their knowledge and understanding well. Consequently, they are confident in undertaking independent research tasks that require them to apply their knowledge and understanding at greater depth. Work in pupils' books exemplifies the cumulative impact of good teaching over time, including that of handwriting. One example of this is the exemplary quality of pupils' independent research relating to the planets. These projects are presented at a high standard and are informative and engaging. They demonstrate pupils' acquisition of a deep knowledge of the planets.
- Pupils in upper school build upon the prior learning gained from their time in school to make good progress and achieve well in nationally accredited qualifications. All pupils in Year 11 in 2018 attained good passes in at least five GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Average grades for all subjects taken at GCSE in 2018 were at least in line with national averages and in many subjects, including English and individual sciences, were well above national averages. Over time, grade averages in school show sustained improvement. Pupils studying GCSE equivalent qualifications in performing arts did well and achieved highly.
- Most-able pupils do well. They make good progress from their starting points and attain highly, particularly in English and mathematics across the school and in other subjects in upper school, because of the challenge they receive from teachers who have high expectations.

- Reading is taught well across the school, beginning in early years, where a secure foundation in phonics equips pupils well for more complex reading activities as they progress. As a result of the teaching they receive, pupils swiftly become fluent and ardent readers who develop a love of literature. They thrive on the reading recommendations of their peers and their teachers and gain experience of a wide range of authors and different genres.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have ensured that all statutory welfare requirements are met. Safeguarding is effective and of a similar high standard to that seen across the rest of the school.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. They share the high expectations and clear vision of senior leaders in the school and communicate these well to other staff in early years. They undertake regular and effective checks of children's progress and use these well to amend their teaching to meet children's needs.
- Children typically enter the early years with levels of development that are typical for their age. A small number of pupils start the early years with little or no prior experience of education in the United Kingdom and often speak English as an additional language. Consequently, they start with lower levels of development in those areas of learning related to language, communication and literacy.
- Children in early years get a good start to their education and benefit from the good quality of teaching they receive from dedicated teachers and committed and well-trained teaching assistants. Teachers and other adults routinely use questioning effectively to deepen children's understanding and address any misconceptions they might have.
- As a result of teachers' strong promotion of social skills, pupils become confident learners who willingly collaborate with each other to develop their learning. They are articulate and eager to share their exciting environment with visitors. This was exemplified by the time taken by children to carefully show the inspector around their class and explain the learning that went on in each area.
- Pupils learn about caring for others through effective role play in the doctor's surgery, where children ensure that toy babies receive the right treatment and care to make them better. They look after real caterpillars and are excited to see them transition into butterflies as part of their work associated with the book 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. This also allows pupils to explore and develop the breadth and confident use of more complex vocabulary. This was exemplified by children eagerly explaining that the caterpillars in the class had become cocoons, before checking that the inspector understood what they meant by the word 'cocoon'.
- The early years is adequately equipped with a wide range of resources that promote effective learning, including in the outdoors. However, some equipment does show some signs of wear and tear. Teachers' use of the outdoors to enhance children's learning, including the wide range of environments offered by the school's considerable grounds, is not fully developed.
- Children make good progress from their starting points to achieve well and be ready for their next stages of education. As a result of the teaching they receive, an increasing

proportion of children, that is similar to national average, leave the early years with a good level of development.

School details

Unique reference number	104730
DfE registration number	341/6040
Inspection number	10092285

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Christian Fellowship School Trust
Chair	John Graham Sharples
Headteacher	William Worsley
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,434–£4,867
Telephone number	0151 709 1642
Website	www.cfschool.org.uk
Email address	info@cfschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–16 February 2017

Information about this school

- Christian Fellowship School is a mixed non-denominational Christian day school. Many pupils belong to a minority ethnic group.
- The school is registered to admit up to 200 pupils aged between four and 16 years of age. The proportion of pupils with SEND is average.
- The school aims to assist parents in developing the hearts, minds and practical capabilities of their children to equip them for productive life and work, recognising the spiritual and eternal, as well as the physical world, and to become responsible citizens.
- The school is housed in one building. It is divided into the lower school (Reception to Year

3), middle school (Years 4 to 8) and upper school (Years 9 to 11). The premises are safe, well maintained and suitable for learning.

- The school does not use any alternative provision but does have an established link to a maintained special school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of learning and recreation activities, including parts of lessons, and looked at pupils' work. They listened to pupils reading and talked with pupils about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and a range of middle and subject leaders, including the SENCo, who is the senior leader responsible for special educational needs, and the designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors spoke with the chair of the governing body, who was also a representative of the proprietor.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils' progress and to school management, including the arrangements to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and staff and took account of the 106 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspectors also took account of the 37 responses to the staff questionnaire, the one response to the online pupil questionnaire and the 153 responses to a paper-based questionnaire that was completed during the inspection.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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