

The Branch Christian School

Dewsbury Gospel Church, West Park Street, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 4LA

Inspection dates

12 June 2019

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- At the time of previous inspection, older pupils did not have access to impartial careers advice. Pupils were, therefore, not as well prepared as they could be for the next steps in their education, training or employment.
- School leaders proposed actions to address this unmet standard by engaging with the local careers advice services. They planned to have pupils attend a regional careers fayre. They proposed setting up a programme of external visitors to the school on a regular basis so that pupils can learn about careers in a range of industry sectors. Leaders also planned to introduce opportunities for work experience for older pupils. Leaders planned to introduce online systems to support pupils.
- Leaders have acted promptly to put their proposed measures in place. Older pupils have been supported both within the school and by impartial, external partners to help them make informed choices.
- Work experience for older pupils has now been introduced. The school has developed documentation to help pupils make the best of their experience by keeping records and journals.
- Records show that the school's plan to bring in external visitors to talk about careers in their various industries is in place and continuing. Pupils have attended a regional careers fayre.
- The planned introduction of an online careers information and guidance programme has not yet been introduced, as discussions with the provider have taken longer than anticipated. Governors confirm that an agreement with the provider is now in place and that the programme will be rolled out in the near future.
- Pupils report that the range of activities in the careers programme is helpful and informative. It develops pupils' wider understanding of the options open to them. As a consequence, pupils are now well prepared for the next steps in their education, training or employment.
- This standard is now met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

7(a), 7(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, trustees had not ensured that safer recruitment procedures were followed to ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils. Training and record-keeping were not effective.
- Leaders planned to set up a register of safeguarding training, and they set about bringing training up to date and to the required standard. They planned appropriately to ensure that all the required checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils were carried out and recorded carefully.
- Leaders addressed this area as their first priority. Designated safeguarding leaders have completed appropriate training. Governors and all staff have completed initial safeguarding training. They keep this up to date through regular updates from the designated safeguarding leaders and the headteacher. Displays, with contact details of relevant safeguarding leaders and related teams and agencies, ensure that staff have ready prompts of how to respond, if they have a concern about a child.
- Leaders have ensured that governors and staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the current statutory guidance of the Secretary of State for Education. Leaders have put in place a straightforward and effective system to report and record concerns to designated safeguarding leaders. The inspector's discussion with staff during the inspection confirms that they are well informed and keep a sharp eye out for any signs of abuse or neglect. They know what to do if they have a concern.
- A member of the governing body and the headteacher have completed certificated safer recruitment training. This provides confidence that all the required steps are taken to ensure that only suitable adults work with pupils.
- Governors have ensured that they have now received appropriate references for all staff and that staff qualifications are checked. As a consequence, they are able to check that the single central register of pre-employment checks is up to date and complete.
- Safeguarding leaders keep detailed records when they have a concern about a pupil. They record how they have involved other teams and agencies appropriately to ensure pupils get the help they need.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe are underpinned by a detailed and well-considered child protection policy. The policy gives detailed advice on what should be done if a disclosure is made or when staff have a concern about a pupil. It provides helpful information to remind staff about different types of neglect and abuse and the signs they should look out for.
- The full range of steps taken to safeguard pupils has established a safe culture where pupils can thrive and are confident that staff will look after them well. During their discussions with the inspector, pupils confirmed that they feel safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when they use the internet or other digital technologies. Pupils trust staff to help them, if they have a concern.
- This standard is now met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

18(2)(e), 18(3)

- At the time of the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that appropriate checks were conducted for any staff who had previously lived or worked outside the United Kingdom before taking up employment at the school.
- Leaders planned to strengthen their procedures through policy reviews and updated training to ensure safe recruitment practices are secure when they next appoint a member of staff. They planned to take remedial action to check employment histories and have appropriate checks made on current staff.
- Leaders have acted quickly, making this a priority for improvement alongside other aspects of safeguarding.
- Leaders have completed their review of policy and practice. They have ensured the headteacher and at least one member of the governing body have completed safer recruitment training.
- Leaders have ensured that the employment histories of staff have been rechecked and that any additional checks for those who have lived or worked outside of the United Kingdom have been carried out. Checks are appropriately recorded in the single central register.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the previous inspection, leaders had not ensured that all the independent school standards were met consistently, because they did not demonstrate good knowledge and skills appropriate to their role to do so.
- Governors planned to increase their knowledge of the independent standards. Governors planned to enhance their work to support and challenge school leaders by writing an improvement plan by which to hold school leaders to account.
- Governors and leaders planned specific activities to address each of the unmet standards. They planned with senior leaders how to improve training for staff, so as to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and improve classroom practices.
- The board of trustees has established a sub-committee to form the governing body for the school. The governing body have a range of relevant skills and professional experience. As a consequence, they are better placed to provide strong strategic direction, challenge and support to the school.
- The board of trustees has appointed a new headteacher to lead the school. The headteacher took up post in February 2019.
- Governors have ensured they have completed up-to-date training on safeguarding matters. Governors visit the school regularly. They meet informally with pupils and hold discussions about safeguarding with designated safeguarding leaders and other staff. Governors attend staff meetings to keep informed about the range of relevant training for staff. Governors have ensured that there is an effective system for staff to record any

concern they may have about a pupil.

- Governors check that safeguarding and safer recruitment practices are being followed. For example, governors check the single central register to ensure it is kept up to date and is complete. They have completed checks on staff employment histories and carried out any missed checks, as identified at the previous inspection. Governors work with designated safeguarding leaders to ensure that the annual audit is completed.
- Governors' active involvement makes a valuable contribution to the school's promotion of pupils' welfare. Sharper systems and careful monitoring provide confidence that the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective.
- Governors have challenged leaders to sharpen the schools' arrangements for checking pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A new straightforward system for checking pupils' in-year progress is in place. Leaders realise that the system needs further refinement, so that they can check and evaluate the progress made by pupils over a longer period of time. Leaders and staff are developing further approaches to baselining pupils and the periodic assessment of pupils in English and mathematics to do this.
- Governors have worked with school leaders to introduce a programme of staff training to improve classroom practices and raise expectations of pupils' achievement. Staff value this training. They say it has improved their practice. Evidence from a sample of pupils' work shows that the quality, range and presentation of work is improving quickly, although there remains some variability across subjects.
- Leaders' training for staff on how to develop pupils' extended writing is improving the quality and range of language that pupils use to write in different genres. Opportunities to use extended writing in other subject areas is broadening. Similarly, pupils are given more opportunities to reapply their mathematical skills in others subjects than was the case at the previous inspection. This is contributing to the better progress pupils are making currently.
- With support and challenge from governors, leaders have put in place arrangements to provide effective, impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Leaders are seeking to develop this by extending the range of speakers and visitors to the school. They intend to roll out their plans to use an online careers advice package in the near future. As a consequence, pupils are now better prepared for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- This standard is now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

■ Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that:
- 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
- 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
- 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.

■ Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

■ Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.

■ Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
- 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	107795
DfE registration number	382/6018
Inspection number	10106764

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	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Dewsbury Gospel Church
Chair	Stephen Hodgson
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Holt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,190.00
Telephone number	01924 452 511
Website	www.branchchristianschool.org.uk
Email address	jeholt@branchchristianschool.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	20 to 22 November 2018

Information about this school

- The Branch Christian School is a Christian independent day school for boys and girls aged three to 18. The school has an open admissions policy.
- There are currently 19 pupils on roll, aged between six and 16. Currently, there are no children in the early years foundation stage, and no students in the sixth form.
- The previous standard inspection took place in November 2018.

- Since the previous inspection, the board of trustees has appointed a subcommittee to act as a governing body of the school.
- A new headteacher has taken up post in February 2019.
- The school does not make use of any alternative education providers.
- Pupils follow the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Secondary pupils work towards achieving the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE).

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was conducted without notice. 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 the previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the standard inspection in November 2018.
- The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to complete an action plan for improvement. The action plan was evaluated by Ofsted in March 2019. The action plan was deemed to be acceptable with modifications. At the time of the progress monitoring inspection, leaders had made the modifications to the action plan.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, designated safeguarding leaders, staff and members of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke with pupils informally and formally in a meeting. The views of a small number of parents and carers were taken into account.
- The inspector visited lessons, and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work.
- A wide range of documents, including those about the arrangements to keep pupils safe, pupils' progress, and training for staff was reviewed.

Inspection team

Chris Campbell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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