

# The Vine Christian School

Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, Berkshire RG7 1HF

## Inspection dates

25–27 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Trustees, governors and leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Safeguarding, including in early years, is ineffective. Some staff, including the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) have not received appropriate training.
- Safeguarding concerns are not logged systematically or followed up. This means pupils do not receive the help that they may need in a timely manner.
- Leaders do not ensure that school policies and procedures are implemented thoroughly. Monitoring arrangements are underdeveloped.
- Pupils, including children in early years, do not develop secure early reading skills. Staff do not receive training to help them improve their teaching skills and expertise.
- There is a lack of expertise in how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some aspects of the school's non-core curriculum are not implemented. The school's schemes of work are not adhered to closely or taught regularly enough.
- Pupils do not apply their grammar and spelling skills to creative writing tasks. The standard of writing is below that seen typically for the pupils' age groups.
- The early years provision is inadequate as leaders do not implement the full requirements of the early years statutory framework. Parents and carers are not informed of their children's achievement at the end of Reception Year.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are respectful and behave well. They enjoy school and attend regularly.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and value the school's ethos.

### 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 review and sharpen safeguarding processes so that:
  - leaders and relevant staff fully understand safeguarding requirements and ensure that statutory processes are in place
  - all staff read Part 1 and the Annex of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'
  - all staff receive appropriate training and have oversight and understanding of the school's safeguarding policy
  - new staff receive appropriate safeguarding training when they join the school
  - record keeping, particularly that relating to child protection processes, is rigorous.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management and governance, by making sure that:
  - staff training needs are acted upon in a timely manner
  - school improvement actions are monitored to evaluate their impact
  - school policies are implemented effectively, including those relating to safeguarding, special educational needs and careers education
  - pupils with SEND receive appropriate adjustment so that they progress well within the curriculum
  - leaders' plans for the non-core curriculum are implemented consistently and delivered regularly
  - all requirements of the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' are fully implemented.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils, including children in early years and those with SEND, make good progress, by:
  - developing the skills and expertise of staff, particularly regarding supporting pupils with SEND
  - supporting staff to improve their skills in the teaching of reading and writing
  - training staff so that they have secure subject knowledge to deliver the school's non-core curriculum.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes, including at leadership level. The headteacher was appointed in September 2018 and some new staff have recently joined the school. During this time, the proprietor has not ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
- Although leaders have ensured that the school is operating within its registration status, some requirements are not implemented knowledgeably or sufficiently. For instance, the learning and development requirements of the early years statutory framework are not implemented in full.
- Leaders lack the expertise necessary to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. In this aspect of schooling, policy and procedures are not implemented thoroughly enough. For instance, adults do not make appropriate adjustments for pupils with SEND to overcome their potential barriers to learning.
- Leaders have ensured that the school's core policies, such as those relating to safeguarding and special educational needs, are compliant with what is required. However, policy aims and processes are not transferred into practice. Although the school has suitable policies in place, school leaders and staff do not apply them consistently, including those relating to careers guidance.
- Leaders have developed the school's assessment system since the last inspection. Pupils are now assessed regularly in mathematics, reading, English and science. However, leaders do not yet analyse pupils' outcomes to identify patterns and trends. Some statutory requirements, such as reporting to parents at the end of early years, are not adhered to.
- School leaders have given some thought to the curriculum, wisely developing its breadth beyond the 'accelerated Christian education (ACE)' curriculum. Leaders intend for pupils to experience subjects such as art and music during their time in the school. However, the school's non-core curriculum is not yet followed or implemented well enough. These aspects are predominantly taught by volunteers who do not follow the school's plans carefully enough.
- Staff training is not aligned well to leaders' curricular aims, particularly in the non-core subjects (subjects other than mathematics and English). This means that staff do not have the subject expertise to deliver what is expected. Neither do leaders devote enough time to allow for coverage of subjects such as music and geography.
- Staff have received some helpful training related to the ACE curriculum. However, this training has had a limited impact as it does not cover the full range of roles and responsibilities that staff are expected to fulfil.
- The school has identified some improvement actions this year. However, there are no monitoring procedures in place, so it is unclear what the impact has been. The school's development plan does not make clear who is responsible for leading on which aspects.
- Enrichment beyond the curriculum is too restrictive. Pupils' homework is limited in its scope as predominantly they complete unfinished class work. The school has not

implemented a programme of extra-curricular activities. However, visitors to the school provide useful talks for pupils, particularly about safeguarding matters. Pupils also enjoy 'news' sessions where they discuss world issues, such as the recent Notre Dame fire.

- Parents are positive about the school and the experience their children receive. Parents praise the school's approach to developing pupils' moral code. One noted: 'We love the values taught at this school. The pupils learn to set their own goals from a young age. They learn responsibility, honesty and respect.'

## **Governance**

- Those responsible for governance have not held school leaders to account effectively enough. As a result, the school does not meet all the independent school standards.
- Governors and trustees hold good intentions and have supported the headteacher in the construction of the school development plan. However, they do not monitor the school's progress towards achieving these aims with sufficient rigour.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and meets the requirements of the most recent statutory guidance. However, staff do not implement or understand this document. Consequently, the school's practices do not reflect what is set out in policy.
- Staff have not received sufficient training. Not all staff have read 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and so are unaware of their statutory duties. For instance, some staff do not take action when they spot concerns. This is because they do not hold a secure understanding of worrying signs and the follow-up action required.
- The DSL does not carry out their role effectively. When concerns arise, these are not logged, nor followed up. There are no systems in place for keeping chronologies of concerns and as a result, the DSL does not retain a sharp oversight of this aspect.
- New staff do not receive safeguarding training before they take up their roles. There is no system in place to make sure that adults who join the school become fully versed in their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Other aspects of the school's safeguarding practice are stronger. Leaders ensure that staff are checked to ensure that they are safe to be with children before they take up role. The school's record of recruitment checks meets requirements.
- Pupils benefit from external visitors who provide an insight, for instance, into how to stay safe near railway lines or rivers.

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

## **Requires improvement**

- Staff have not had sufficient guidance to support their knowledge of the school's non-core curriculum. Despite some strengths in the quality of teaching and learning within the ACE curriculum, too often, adults' subject knowledge in non-core subjects is insufficient to deliver the learning required.

- Many classes in the afternoons are led by adult volunteers. In some activities, such as when preparing to compete against other ACE schools for a student convention event, adults are highly expert and really support pupils in developing their skills well. For instance, when preparing to perform a selection of hymns, pupils sang expressively and tunefully.
- When staff move away from the core curriculum to teach subjects such as creative writing, they have limited impact. This is because some teachers do not have secure subject knowledge. They are unclear on which key skills pupils need to master to make progress. Staff training opportunities do not support teachers well enough to develop such skills.
- Pupils with SEND are not catered for well enough. Activities are not always sufficiently adapted or adjusted to meet their needs. Although pupils benefit from working at a slower pace, staff have limited understanding of what other adjustments could be made to support pupils to learn well.
- Most older pupils read fluently. However, the teaching of phonics in early years requires improvement. Activities are not always planned that build on children's prior attainment. Younger pupils do not fully transfer their word-building skills to their own independent reading and writing.
- The school's core curriculum is delivered competently. Pupils move through the programme progressively and understand what is expected. This enables pupils to build and develop their understanding.
- There is a consistent approach to teaching the school's core curriculum across the school that is underpinned by the ACE principles. Adults supervise pupils as they complete a variety of tasks linked to word-building, mathematics and social studies. Pupils are adept at scoring their own work and then seeking help if they make mistakes. Some pupils say they would find it helpful to receive explanations before they begin, rather than after they have made mistakes.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Classroom routines are very well established. In all age groups and classes, pupils listen well and respond positively to their teacher's instructions. As a result, pupils develop good attitudes to learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Inadequate**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Support for the most vulnerable pupils is underdeveloped. From time to time, when pupils may need help, leaders are too slow to refer them on to the appropriate agencies. When concerns persist, leaders do not act with enough tenacity to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- Pupils with SEND are not identified early enough. Teachers do not have the skills necessary to modify or adapt tasks. Pupils are not helped to catch up, particularly when developing their reading and writing skills.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand modern-day British values and develop a strong sense of respect for others,

for example.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well and work independently for sustained periods of time to complete their 'packets of accelerated Christian education' workbooks.
- Pupils are respectful towards one another and can collaborate sensibly. The school is an orderly environment. Pupils conduct themselves in a polite and respectful manner during their day-to-day activities.
- Outdoors, pupils have very limited space to run around freely. Nevertheless, adults supervise a range of appropriate activities such as football. Although sometimes boisterous, pupils play well together and ensure that everyone is included.
- Pupils are largely positive about most aspects of their schooling, including safety, teaching and friendships. Pupils say there is no bullying. However, pupils would like to receive more useful information on which to steer their future lives. Although leaders have a plan for careers education, this is not implemented fully.
- Parents say that the school deals with bullying effectively and promotes good behaviour among pupils. 100% of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, would recommend the school.
- The school retains up-to-date attendance and admission registers. Most pupils attend regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils with SEND who have lower starting points do not consistently receive the individual support they need to help them to make good progress and achieve well. Although individual plans are in place, these are not carefully constructed to ensure that the support on offer matches pupils' individual needs and requirements.
- The standard that pupils reach in developing their knowledge and understanding of phonics is inconsistent. Pupils do not securely develop a grasp of key sounds. This limits their ability when participating in creative writing sessions to spell unknown words correctly.
- Older pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. They can talk about their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl and Philip Pullman with enthusiasm. However, such reading materials are predominantly provided at home. Leaders have plans to tap into this enthusiasm and promote wider reading more strongly. However, the school's reading list has not been introduced to pupils yet.
- Most pupils are on track to achieve what is expected within the ACE curriculum. This means that pupils build up their skills effectively, including in mathematics, within the school's core curriculum.
- Pupils' writing is of a poor standard. When writing freely and creatively, pupils have an underdeveloped understanding of punctuation and grammatical devices. Sometimes teachers do not have secure enough subject knowledge to intervene and help pupils

improve their writing.

- Some pupils say that they would like help and reassurance when they know they lack confidence. They say that although they are supported after a making a mistake, it would be beneficial sometimes to have help at an earlier stage.

## Early years provision

## Inadequate

- The early years statutory framework is not implemented in full. This means that there are some learning and development elements alongside some safeguarding and welfare requirements that are not in place. The independent school standards in relation to early years are not met.
- Although staff with responsibility for early years children hold the relevant training qualifications, the welfare requirements of the early years are not met. The safeguarding weaknesses reported earlier, including lack of compliance with the school's policy and procedures, also apply to this part of the school. When concerns about individual children emerge, these are not reported onwards to the school's DSL or appropriate body as a matter of course.
- There is no clear leadership structure in place. Although the pre-school teacher manages her nursery-aged children and evaluates this aspect, there is no coherent oversight of the whole department. The pre-school teacher has begun to identify strengths and weaknesses, producing a useful self-evaluation document. However, this document does not consider children's achievement at the end of early years. Senior leaders' evaluation does not extend to the full age range.
- In the pre-school, staff observe children's learning and capture key moments. They use these to assess children's progress and report to parents. Parents contribute too, and children's learning journeys are comprehensive, covering all areas of learning.
- In the school's Reception class, children complete the early years foundation stage prematurely and their achievement is not measured against the early learning goals. Children's achievements are not recorded or reported to parents during this final phase. This is a breach of statutory requirements.
- Staff have not kept up to date with the latest developments and are not receiving support to do so. Consequently, staff are not fully versed in the requirements of the early years foundation stage and do not implement the school's curriculum plans thoroughly enough.
- The teaching of early reading is muddled. Children know their initial letter sounds well, but their grasp of letter-sound combinations is less secure. Adults do not always structure learning tasks progressively, and this confuses children and limits their progress.
- Children get along well with one another. In the pre-school, children happily initiate activities and play cooperatively. In the Reception class, children respond well to adults and try their best. Relationships between adults and children are respectful.

## School details

Unique reference number	134424
DfE registration number	872/6013
Inspection number	10091645

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	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	The Trustees of the Vine Christian School (Reading)
Chair	R M Spooner
Headteacher	Eve Strike
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,350 to £5,250
Telephone number	0118 988 6464
Website	<a href="http://www.vinechristianschool.org.uk">www.vinechristianschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@thevcs.org.uk">office@thevcs.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	17–19 October 2017

## Information about this school

- The Vine Christian School opened in 2003. It is a non-selective Christian day school which is part of the Christian Education Europe network of schools. The school is situated within the complex of the Three Mile Cross Church Centre in Reading.
- The school's core curriculum follows the 'accelerated Christian education (ACE)' curriculum produced by Christian Education Europe, which is a Bible-based education.
- Pupils work individually through progressively more difficult booklets called 'packets of accelerated Christian education' in six core subjects, including English, mathematics,



science, social studies, literature and word-building.

- In the afternoons, pupils learn about other subjects, including history, geography, computing, Spanish, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, and physical education.
- The school is smaller than most schools and consists of four classes. There is a pre-school, where a small number of Nursery-aged children attend part time. Reception-aged children attend the school's ABC class. There is also a junior and a senior class, which are taught in the same room in the morning.
- The proprietors of the school are the trustees. They have responsibility for the finance of the school. Some of the trustees are also governors. They are responsible for all other aspects of the school.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2018 after serving as a supervisor in the school for many years.
- The last standard inspection took place in October 2017, when the school was judged to require improvement.
- The school's aim is to provide 'a high standard of Christ-centred, Bible-based education for children aged 3–18, that builds Godly character and nurtures God-given gifts to prepare students for a full and productive Christian life, for the glory of Him'.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classes, accompanied by the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and met with six pupils to gather their views about the school.
- The inspector looked at a range of pupils' work.
- Nine responses to the online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, and five free-text comments were considered.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of trustees and two governors.
- Two responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.
- A range of school documents was scrutinised. The inspector reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
  - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in subparagraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
  - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
    - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
  - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
  - 3(d) 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;
  - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
  - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.
- 4 The standard in this paragraph is met where the proprietor ensures that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place.

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
  - 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 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.

### **The school must meet the following early years learning and development requirements**

- 2.6. In the final term of the year in which the child reaches age five, and no later than 30 June in that term, the EYFS Profile must be completed for each child. The Profile provides parents and carers, practitioners and teachers with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, their progress against expected levels, and their readiness for Year 1. The Profile must reflect: ongoing observation; all relevant records held by the setting; discussions with parents and carers, and any other adults whom the teacher, parent or carer judges can offer a useful contribution.
- 2.7. Each child's level of development must be assessed against the early learning goals. Practitioners must indicate whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are exceeding expected levels, or not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'). This is the EYFS Profile.
- 2.8. Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the Profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective learning. These should inform a dialogue between Reception and Year 1 teachers about each child's stage of development and learning needs and assist with the planning of activities in Year 1.
- 2.9. Schools must share the results of the Profile with parents and/or carers and explain to them when and how they can discuss the Profile with the teacher who completed it. For children attending more than one setting, the Profile must be completed by the school where the child spends most time. If a child moves to a new school during the academic year, the original school must send their assessment of the child's level of development against the early learning goals to the relevant school within 15 days of receiving a request. If a child moves during the summer term, relevant providers must agree which of them will complete the Profile.
- 2.10. The Profile must be completed for all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process for children with special educational needs and disabilities must be made as appropriate.

Providers should consider whether they may need to seek specialist assistance to help with this. Children will have differing levels of skills and abilities across the Profile and it is important that there is a full assessment of all areas of their development, to inform plans for future activities and to identify any additional support needs.

### **The school must meet the following early years safeguarding and welfare requirements**

- 3.1. Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. The safeguarding and welfare requirements, specified in this section, are designed to help providers create high-quality settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.
- 3.2. Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what early years providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures.
- 3.4. Providers must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere. Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. These should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff, and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting.
- 3.6. Providers must train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and procedures, and ensure that all staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues. Training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way.
- 3.7. Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and to the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales 2015/16'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance. If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.

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