

# The Christian School (Takeley)

Dunmow Road, Brewers End, Takeley, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 6QH

**Inspection dates**

12 November 2019

**Overall outcome**

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

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i)*

- Although met at the previous standard inspection in December 2017 and the two previous monitoring inspections, the Department for Education (DfE) requested that this standard be checked in relation to complaints received. In particular, whether the curriculum takes into account the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Curriculum plans are comprehensive. The school's special educational needs team considers how to adapt the plans to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers demonstrate how they provide additional or personalised support for pupils with SEND in their class. During lesson visits, pupils with SEND were engaged in their learning because of the support they were given. Most staff have received training about how best to adapt tasks for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs team knows that this guidance needs to extend to all staff so that learning activities routinely support pupils with SEND to achieve their best.
- The special educational needs team makes sure that the SEND register is up to date. This helps leaders and staff have an accurate picture of each pupil's needs. While the team's work ensures that there is a good understanding of how to meet pupils' needs, some pupils' targets are not reviewed regularly enough to make sure they are still relevant and focus closely on pupils' next steps.
- This standard continues to be met.

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

*Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)*

- This standard was met at the previous standard inspection in December 2017 and the progress monitoring inspection in February 2019, but the requirements of this standard were not met at the progress monitoring inspection in June 2019. This was because some safeguarding records lacked enough detail and were not stored correctly. This limited leaders' ability to act appropriately and quickly to any concerns around pupils' safety and well-being. Furthermore, leaders were not working effectively with external agencies, such as the local authority children's services, to make sure pupils and their

families received the right support in a timely way.

- In the action plan, the proprietor proposed to:
  - review the school’s safeguarding records and procedures, supported by the local authority safeguarding adviser
  - work closely with the local authority children’s services, considering and implementing any recommendations made
  - review the school’s safeguarding documents and policies to ensure they are in line with local authority policies and procedures
  - ensure trustees conduct regular safeguarding checks, using the local authority guidance
  - ensure that all staff receive appropriate safeguarding training provided by the local authority
  - ensure that safer recruitment procedures are in place.
- Trustees have strengthened the safeguarding team and ensured that there is cover in the school at all times. The headteacher has been appointed as the designated safeguarding leader. He has received training from the local authority and an external consultant. Trustees are in the process of appointing an additional deputy designated safeguarding leader. Safeguarding records are now appropriately completed and stored. This is a recent improvement. Trustees plan to monitor the new systems and feedback strengths and aspects for improvement to the full board of trustees.
- The school’s safeguarding policy has been updated to reflect the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The policy is published on the school’s website. At the beginning of this school year, staff received training from the local authority, which has given them a good understanding of the school’s relevant policies and procedures. Staff know what to look out for and what to do if they have concerns about any pupil’s well-being.
- Leaders have recently reviewed the staff code of conduct and e-safety policies. These communicate leaders’ expectations that staff will always demonstrate clear professional boundaries with pupils and their families. Leaders are mindful that this is particularly relevant in the school’s small, close-knit community. Staff have confirmed their understanding and commitment to adhering to these policies and behaviours. Trustees have plans in place to check that staff remain clear about their responsibilities and how to respond appropriately to safeguard pupils.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils are confident that adults will act quickly if they have any worries.
- Leaders have continued to ensure that they comply with the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- This standard is now met.

*Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)*

- At the time of the previous standard inspection and the two progress monitoring inspections, the requirements relating to the promotion of good behaviour among pupils were met. However, the DfE requested that this standard be checked in relation to complaints received.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's 'promoting behaviour and work practices' policies. These state clearly the school's approaches and expectations for effective behaviour management throughout the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with a group of pupils, visited classes and spoke with pupils about their school experience. In lessons, most pupils are engaged in their learning and work well with each other. Pupils are very positive about the behaviour in the school. They told inspectors that they like the rewards given for good behaviour. Leaders keep records of the few incidents of poor behaviour. Leaders work with families to make sure pupils are supported. Pupils' behaviour does not disrupt pupils' learning.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### *Paragraph 10*

- At the time of the previous standard inspection and the two progress monitoring inspections, the requirements relating to leaders making sure that bullying at the school is prevented were met. However, the DfE requested that this standard be checked in relation to complaints received.
- The school's anti-bullying policy has been recently reviewed and updated. Through the school's curriculum, pupils are taught about behaviour that constitutes bullying, and its upsetting consequences. They understand what bullying is and say it is very rare in the school. Pupils are clear that if bullying does happen, then staff deal with it quickly and it stops.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### *Paragraph 12*

- At the standard inspection in December 2017, the proprietor had not ensured full compliance with the Fire Safety Order (2005). At the progress monitoring inspection in February 2019, leaders had taken effective action to meet this standard.
- Leaders continue to ensure that fire risk assessments are well managed and documented effectively.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### *Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)*

- This standard was met at the previous standard inspection and the progress monitoring inspection in February 2019, but the requirements of this standard were not met at the progress monitoring inspection in June 2019. This was because, while the risk assessments were carried out according to the school's policy, the findings were not always acted on to reduce the risks that had been identified, for example ensuring the consistent and timely testing of electrical equipment.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to:
  - ensure that electrical safety checks and fire system tests take place regularly by suitably qualified personnel or trained trustees, as appropriate

- review the school’s health and safety policy and procedures with an external health and safety consultant to ensure they meet the relevant health and safety legislation.
- Leaders have sought the advice of a qualified health and safety consultant, and they reviewed the risk assessment policy, which covers a range of areas such as fire safety, site security and educational trips.
- The testing of electrical equipment has been completed by a qualified electrical engineer. During a tour of the school, inspectors noted that electrical appliances had been tested.
- Regular health and safety checks take place and are suitably documented.
- Pupils explain how they take part in completing risk assessments for trips. They told inspectors about the need for ‘meet up points’ and how they should always stay in a group. Pupils say that they are well looked after.
- The designated safeguarding trustee plans to monitor the new systems and feedback strengths and aspects for improvement to the board of trustees.
- This standard is now met.

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

*Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)*

- The DfE stipulates that all inspections must include these mandatory safeguarding checks. At the time of the standard inspection, and the two progress monitoring visits, the standard was met.
- This progress monitoring inspection found that the required pre-employment checks are completed appropriately and are well documented on the single central register.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

*Paragraph 25*

- During the standard inspection, inspectors determined that the school premises were not being maintained to a standard that promoted pupils’ health, safety and welfare. This was because there were many areas that were untidy, disorganised and full of ‘clutter’.
- As stated in the progress monitoring inspection in February 2019, the processes for carrying out health and safety checks had improved. The school environment was more orderly, and equipment was stored safely.
- This standard continues to be met.

#### Part 6. Provision of information

*Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(1)(c), 32(1)(d), 32(1)(g), 32(3), 32(3)(g)*

- Although met at the previous standard inspection and the two progress monitoring inspections, the DfE requested this standard be checked in relation to complaints received.
- Leaders and trustees make sure that all of the information specified in the standards, such as details about the curriculum, safeguarding arrangements and pupils’

performance, is made available to parents of pupils, parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. During this inspection, the inspectors made leaders aware of an error in the date of a previous monitoring inspection on the school's website, which was misleading. Leaders rectified this immediately.

- This standard continues to be met.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)*

- Although met at the previous standard inspection and the two progress monitoring inspections, the DfE requested that this standard be checked in relation to complaints received.
- Leaders have recently reviewed their complaints policy which is available on the school's website. This meets all the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The policy outlines a clear, staged process with timescales for any parent wishing to make a complaint. The school has received four complaints in the last school year. Inspectors sampled the complaint records, which demonstrate that leaders and trustees had followed the school's procedures and within the specified time frames.
- This standard continues to be met.

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

*Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)*

- At the previous standard inspection, this standard was not met. This was because leaders and trustees had not ensured that all of the independent school standards were met. Additionally, leaders and trustees were not checking the work of the school to identify areas for improvement and plans to address these. Trustees were not holding leaders to account for the school's performance. At the two previous monitoring inspections, the standard continued to be unmet because some aspects of leadership and management remained underdeveloped. Additionally, the independent school standards had not been consistently met.
- The DfE required the school to draw up an action plan outlining how previously unmet standards would be met. In September 2019, the school's action plan was judged to be acceptable. Leaders and trustees have worked hard to make sure actions have been completed and within the timescales stated.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor proposed to:
  - strengthen governance and leadership by developing an evaluation report and improvement plans that accurately reflect the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide a clear route for improvement
  - ensure that improvement plans are monitored and reviewed regularly with amendments made as necessary
  - provide trustees with regular reports on the progress and impact of improvement actions
  - ensure that a process is in place to appraise the headteachers' performance and

effectiveness in driving improvement

- ensure that trustees receive training to increase their knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively
  - reorganise the board of trustees to ensure that all aspects of the school's work are monitored and trustees have a clear strategic overview of the impact of leaders' actions to secure further improvement
  - review the school's policies so that they reflect current practice and drive improvement
  - ensure that all independent school standards are consistently met.
- Recently, the headteacher commissioned external support from the local authority and specialist consultants to work with leaders. Leaders have acted on the training and advice they have been given to improve safeguarding and health and safety procedures.
  - Leaders and trustees have improved the written policies and procedures for safeguarding, health and safety and risk assessments, and, additionally, the implementation of them. Staff understand these and now ensure these are put into practice. Pupils say they are happy and feel safe in school.
  - Leaders have sensibly strengthened governance by appointing new trustees with a range of skills and expertise. The board of trustees has been restructured, and roles and responsibilities have been clarified. Trustees will now oversee different parts of the independent school standards. These allocated roles are very recent. Some new trustees have not received training to make sure they are effective in carrying out their roles.
  - Leaders and trustees demonstrate commitment and a determination to improve the school. Leaders have recently produced a school evaluation document and a school development plan. These have been shared with trustees and staff. Trustees are beginning to develop a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
  - Leaders and trustees have put many new systems in place since September 2019, and they have shared these with staff. It is too early to determine the sustained impact of these changes.
  - Trustees are beginning to take a more active role in checking what leaders tell them about aspects of the school's performance. This is still 'work in progress' and recently implemented. Leaders and trustees have not had the chance to show how they use the information they gather more smartly to identify any weaknesses, improve provision and hold leaders to account.
  - This standard remains unmet.

## **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, as set out in the annex of this report. 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.

## School details

Unique reference number	115436
DfE registration number	881/6041
Inspection number	10128858

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Christian School (Takeley) Trust
Chair	Mrs C Bowman
Headteacher	Mr M E Humphries
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,168 to £8,544
Telephone number	01279 871 182
Website	<a href="http://www.takeley-christian.essex.sch.uk">www.takeley-christian.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@tcst.org.uk">head@tcst.org.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	5–7 December 2017

## Information about this school

- The Christian School (Takeley) was registered with the DfE in 1989. The school was founded by a group of parents and friends who belonged to the same church. The school's aim is to provide an education based on Christian faith and values. School governance is conducted by the trust.
- The trust is the proprietor of the school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are White British.
- The school is registered to admit a maximum of 70 pupils. There are 53 pupils currently on roll. The registered age range is three to 16 years. Pupils currently at the school are



aged three to 16 years.

- The school admits some pupils with SEND, arising mainly from social, emotional or mental health needs or medical conditions. Some pupils have an education, care and health plan.
- The school does not use supply staff.

## 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.
- The inspection was carried out without notice.
- This was the third progress monitoring inspection following the school's most recent standard inspection in December 2017, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged as requires improvement.
- In March 2018, following the December 2017 standard inspection, a school action plan was submitted to the DfE, containing actions that leaders identified they intended to take in order to meet the independent school standards. The plan was deemed unacceptable. A second action plan was presented in August 2018. The DfE accepted the second action plan as appropriate.
- During the progress monitoring inspection in February 2019, while many standards previously unmet were found to be met, there remained some unmet standards.
- In the June 2019 monitoring inspection, leaders had not continued to meet three of the standards previously met in February's monitoring inspection. Therefore, standards remained unmet.
- In September 2019, leaders submitted a school action plan to the DfE, with proposed actions and a specified time frame, in order to address the unmet standards. The DfE accepted the action plan as appropriate.
- During this third progress monitoring inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and most of the trustees. Meetings were also held with one of the deputy designated safeguarding leaders and a member of the school's special educational needs team.
- Both inspectors undertook tours of the school and met with staff and pupils.
- The inspectors held phone conversations with a local authority representative and an external consultant about their work with the school.
- The inspectors reviewed the documentation relating to the leaders' evaluation and improvement planning, health and safety, safeguarding, behaviour, exclusions, risk assessments and the complaints procedures.

## Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Lucas	Her Majesty's Inspector

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

### **The school does not meet the following independent school standards**

*Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection*

#### **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.

### **The school now meets the following requirements of the independent school standards**

#### **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.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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