

The Branch Christian School

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

Inspection dates

20–22 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The trustees have not ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met. Trustees do not effectively check the work of the school.
- Leaders do not ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed. They do not check employment history well enough before staff appointments are made.
- The quality of teaching is variable, particularly in subjects taught in the afternoon. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Staff do not ensure that pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points across the curriculum.
- Safeguarding training for staff is not kept up to date. There is not an effective system to record concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Trustees do not make sure that pupils receive high-quality careers advice and guidance, which includes access to an impartial careers adviser.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not clearly identify how to bring about the changes needed in the school.
- Professional development for staff is limited. There is no evaluation of the impact of any such training on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Trustees are committed and dedicated to improving the school. They are aware of the current weaknesses and are keen to ensure that improvements are made promptly.
- Staff morale is high. Staff feel well supported.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of British values. They show respect and tolerant attitudes towards others.

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?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that safer recruitment procedures are followed at all times and statutory pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff before they are appointed
 - making sure safeguarding training for staff and trustees is kept up to date so that a culture of safeguarding is maintained at all times
 - introducing a system to record concerns about pupils' welfare and the subsequent actions taken by staff
 - ensuring that the independent school standards are met
 - developing the school improvement plan so that it clearly identifies the main priorities and actions for improvement and includes measurable steps to judge the progress made in addressing these
 - providing high-quality professional development for staff, and ensuring that the effect such training has on improving the quality of teaching is evaluated
 - implementing an effective quality assurance system so that trustees can accurately check the work of the school
 - ensuring that leaders understand and comply with the statutory welfare requirements for the early years.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that staff have a clear awareness of what pupils know and can do, particularly in subjects taught in the afternoon, so that the work set enables pupils to make good progress
 - providing wider opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills and mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring that all staff have the highest expectations of pupils' presentation in all subjects.
- 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

- Leaders do not ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.
- The school does not have a headteacher. The trustees and the school's senior administrator are responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. They have been unable to ensure that important aspects of the school's work, including the arrangements for safeguarding, improvement planning and staff training, are fit for purpose.
- Although the school has a suitable safeguarding policy, leaders do not make sure that this is embedded in practice and that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. For example, staff safeguarding training is not kept up to date. Safer recruitment procedures are not followed consistently. There is no system for recording welfare concerns about pupils and any subsequent follow-up actions.
- Trustees are devising a quality assurance plan to check the work of the school. However, this is in its infancy. Current systems to monitor the quality of teaching do not focus sufficiently on the effect of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- The school improvement plan identifies some of the school's areas for improvement. However, the plan does not clearly identify what action will be taken and how success will be measured. There are no criteria to judge the effect of leaders' actions. There is no regular review of the improvement plan. Staff are unclear about the main priorities for improvement.
- Training for staff is limited. There is no evaluation of the professional development opportunities provided to check if they have a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching. The staff who made their views known during the inspection would appreciate additional training to develop their skills. For example, they would welcome training to enable them to better support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Even though there were no children in the early years setting at the time of the inspection, gaps exist in leaders' knowledge of the statutory requirements for the early years.
- British values are fostered well. Leaders place high importance on ensuring that pupils understand the importance of British values and of being good citizens through the strong focus on respect and tolerance of others. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum enables pupils to experience a wide range of subjects. A range of trips and visits enhance the curriculum.
- Parents and carers hold positive views about the school. Trustees ensure that parents' views are sought. For instance, trustees responded to parents asking for more trips and visits for their children, by ensuring that a wider range of enrichment opportunities are available to pupils.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, trustees have received additional training to improve their skills in challenging school leaders. However, they have not used this training to hold leaders to account. Standards have declined since the last inspection.
- Trustees have not ensured that the independent school standards are consistently met. They do not routinely check these standards as part of their evaluations of how well the school is operating.
- Trustees are committed and passionate about improving the school. They have strengthened the skills of the board with the recent appointment of a trustee who has a background in education. Trustees are now beginning to discuss plans, for example to improve the quality of careers education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Trustees have not ensured that the school's own safer recruitment procedures and those in the government guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education', are applied to staff recruitment. For example, employment histories are not checked to ensure that references received are from the most current or recent employer. The school does not request references and instead relies on staff to provide them.
- Staff safeguarding training is not kept up to date, including in the early years. The deputy designated safeguarding lead has not received the necessary training to carry out this role.
- There is no system in place to record welfare concerns about pupils and any follow-up actions.
- During the inspection, there were issues with the accuracy of the single central record, which records pre-employment checks on staff. This was rectified by leaders during the inspection.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe in school. Most pupils who spoke with the inspector said they felt confident to talk to a member of staff if they had any issues or concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the curriculum.
- Pupils work diligently and with interest in morning sessions, where they work on their 'Packets of Accelerated Christian Education' booklets (PACE) as part of the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme. Pupils track and assess their own progress and set their own learning goals. Staff provide effective help and support when required.
- However, in afternoon sessions, where pupils study the wider curriculum, pupils can lose their focus, and this can lead to some low-level disruption. Staff are not clear about pupils' starting points and do not set the work at the right level to enable pupils to make good progress.

- The use of questioning by staff in lessons does not typically encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning. This is particularly evident in afternoon sessions.
- Pupils take pride in the work in their PACE booklets. However, across the broader curriculum, pupils do not present their work well. Teachers do not ensure that there are consistently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are not picked up by staff in pupils' wider curriculum books. This leads to some pupils making the same spelling errors repeatedly.
- Across the curriculum, pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing skills. Although there are many opportunities for pupils to develop fluency in mathematics, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- There is a strong culture of reading. Pupils demonstrate good reading comprehension. They read regularly and enjoy reading.
- Pupils are confident learners. They are not afraid to make mistakes and are resilient in their learning.
- Positive relationships exist between pupils and staff. There is a culture of mutual respect. One member of staff said, 'There is a very caring spirit in the school between staff and pupils. It feels like a family.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not completed appropriate recruitment checks and cannot be sure of the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff safeguarding training is not up to date. There is not an effective system for recording pupil welfare concerns. This means that information can be lost over time. Due to ineffective record-keeping, leaders are unable to identify trends and whether actions to support pupils are successful.
- The school fosters British values well. Pupils talk with confidence about the importance of British values and being good citizens. This features highly in biblical studies lessons. However, pupils' understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in society is less secure.
- Pupils learn about other religions. They also learn from each other about their different faiths. However, older pupils expressed that they would like to learn more about a wider range of religions.
- Pupils are self-assured. They are confident learners. Pupils are well-versed in working independently and taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe online. They also learn about staying safe outside school. For example, they are aware of how to stay safe when crossing roads and riding their bikes.

- Pupils enjoy the variety of trips and visits on offer. For example, pupils talked about their recent trip to a medical museum. This enhanced their understanding of the history of medicine.
- Pupils have high aspirations for their futures. However, they do not currently have access to an independent careers adviser. Trustees are aware of this and intend to ensure that the school works towards the Gatsby careers benchmarks to improve the quality of careers education for pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a result, they attend well and are punctual.
- Pupils talk positively about the school's behaviour and rewards system. They enjoy the recognition they get for working hard. Pupils work diligently in the morning sessions where they work on their PACE booklets. However, they can be less well focused in afternoon sessions when they study the wider curriculum.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. The vast majority of pupils who made their views known to the inspector feel that if bullying does happen, it is dealt with effectively by staff.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They respect their environment and take responsibility for ensuring that the school is well looked after.
- Pupils are polite, well-mannered and courteous to staff, visitors and each other.
- Pupils interact well with each other at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils are well supervised by staff. This leads to a calm and purposeful environment.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress requires improvement because it is too variable across the curriculum.
- Staff do not have a good understanding of pupils' progress across a range of subjects. Staff are not clear about pupils' starting points because they do not assess pupils' progress effectively in some subjects. Therefore, the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently and pupils who need additional help are not supported well enough. In contrast, in PACE sessions, staff are clear about pupils' starting points and provide effective intervention and support when needed.
- In history and geography, pupils take notes on various topics. However, there are very limited opportunities for pupils to use and apply their geographical and historical skills.
- Pupils' skills in extended writing are variable. There are some opportunities in creative writing PACE booklets for pupils to write in paragraphs and to occasionally write extended answers to questions. However, pupils do not have many opportunities to write at greater length or for different audiences, purposes or styles in other subjects.
- Pupils' fluency in mathematics is well developed. However, there are few opportunities across the wider curriculum for pupils to develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills.
- Secondary pupils work towards achieving the International Christian Certificate in Education (ICCE) qualification. This qualification covers a wide range of subjects, for

instance English, mathematics, science, history, technology and etymology. Pupils achieve accreditation that is in line with their different starting points. Most pupils achieve a 'general' certificate by the end of Year 11.

- Older pupils currently do not have access to an independent careers adviser. This means that they are not as well prepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training as they could be.

School details

Unique reference number	107795
DfE registration number	382/6018
Inspection number	10055377

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	22
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Dewsbury Gospel Church
Chair	Stephen Hodgson
Headteacher	No current headteacher
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,190
Telephone number	01924 452511
Website	No website
Email address	office@thebranchchristianschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–11 February 2016

Information about this school

- The Branch Christian school is a Christian independent day school for boys and girls aged 3 to 18.
- The school has an open admissions policy and admits pupils from different faiths.
- At the time of the inspection, the school did not have a headteacher in post. The school is currently being led by a sub-committee of four members of the board of trustees (the proprietor) and the school's senior administrator.

- Pupils follow the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Secondary pupils and sixth-form students work towards achieving the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE).
- The previous standard inspection took place in February 2016.
- There are no pupils who access alternative education provision.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no children accessing the early years or sixth-form students on the school's roll.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspection was carried out over two and a half days.
- The inspector visited lessons and looked at a wide range of pupils' work across different subjects.
- The inspector talked to all pupils during the inspection. The inspector also met with groups of pupils formally.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with four members of the board of trustees and five members of staff.
- A wide range of documentation relating to the school's work was scrutinised during the inspection, including the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of the meetings of the board of trustees and documents relating to the independent school standards.
- The inspector toured the school site.
- The inspector took account of the views of the four members of staff who returned the staff survey, and the four free-text responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. The inspector also took into account the views of two parents who the inspector talked to during the inspection.

Inspection team

Michele Costello, 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 sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 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 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 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 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.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019