

The Vine Christian School

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

Inspection dates

8 October 2020

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6, 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The previous inspection found that staff, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), were insufficiently familiar with safeguarding requirements and processes. The school's safeguarding policy met requirements in terms of the areas it covered, but staff did not implement or understand the document. The school's practices did not reflect what was set out in policy. Not all staff, including the DSL, had received sufficient training for their roles; consequently, they were unaware of their statutory duties. The DSL was not carrying out their role effectively. Record-keeping of safeguarding concerns was weak.
- As required, the proprietor body submitted an action plan to the Department for Education (DfE) which included detail about how the school intended to address the identified weaknesses in safeguarding. This plan indicated that training in safeguarding would take place for all staff, leaders, governors and trustees. The proprietor body committed to improving their monitoring of safeguarding, including undertaking an annual safeguarding audit. It stated that a new DSL and deputy DSL were to be appointed.
- The new DSL, who is also the headteacher, has begun to raise the profile of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding is now discussed at regular staff meetings and governance meetings. The DSL has provided additional in-house training to keep staff updated on the latest statutory guidance. There is a new safeguarding policy, which is published on the school's website. This has been updated with reference to the latest version of 'Keeping children safe in education'.
- Leaders and staff, including the DSL and deputy, have now received some online safeguarding training. The DSL and deputy both hold a current certificate at the required level. All staff have read the school's safeguarding policy and the relevant sections of 'Keeping children safe in education'.

- There has been some increase in staff knowledge and awareness of safeguarding among staff. This can be seen through records which show that they have raised some concerns and held discussions about their knowledge of the school policy.
- However, there is not a secure culture of safeguarding in the school. Some pupils do not feel that they can talk about things that might be worrying them, because they think they are not allowed to.
- Gaps in staff knowledge and understanding about safeguarding remain. For example, not all staff are clear about the indicators of some forms of abuse. Some do not act promptly to inform the DSL when they have concerns about a child. It is not clear that all staff fully understand their role in listening to pupils' concerns or acting on them.
- Record-keeping systems relating to safeguarding are not fit for purpose. The safeguarding policy does not set out a clear enough process for how to record and report concerns. Consequently, methods of recording and reporting concerns remain inconsistent. Time frames for reporting concerns are not kept to. Records relating to safeguarding cases are kept in different places.
- The DSL has a developing knowledge of her safeguarding role. She is well meaning and wants to do the right things to ensure pupils are safeguarded. However, she does not have a deep enough understanding of safeguarding. For example, she is not clear about some of the local contextual issues that might make pupils unsafe. She sometimes lacks confidence in making decisions about when and how to act, including when to reach out to other professionals and agencies for guidance about the protection of pupils. Consequently, concerns are not always raised with the right people or in the right way. She is currently looking for additional training and support from other safeguarding professionals to improve her knowledge and understanding of her role.
- Trustees have not kept a secure, strategic oversight of safeguarding. During this inspection, it became clear that the safeguarding audit they completed was too generous because stated actions and procedures have not become embedded practice. Trustees have not monitored staff understanding or practices sufficiently, so are unclear on the remaining weaknesses in safeguarding. Some trustees' knowledge of their role in whistle-blowing procedures was inaccurate.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the standards contained within these paragraphs are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- This part of the standards was not met in June 2019 because leaders and trustees were not demonstrating the good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role in ensuring that the independent school standards were being met consistently. This included that they were not actively promoting the well-being of pupils.
- The action plan submitted to the DfE stated that there would be more regular communication between staff, the headteacher and trustees about safeguarding. However, it did not provide adequate information about how leaders and those in positions of governance would address all of the weaknesses in safeguarding found at the last inspection.

- Leaders have updated relevant policies relating to safeguarding. However, leaders do not display a secure understanding of the detail of these policies. There has been a lack of urgency and rigour in ensuring that pupils are safe. Monitoring of the effectiveness of safeguarding has been insufficient, leading to a lack of clarity about where weaknesses in safeguarding remain.
- Staff have had some safeguarding training and the profile of safeguarding has been raised, but this has not resulted in a positive culture of safeguarding and welfare throughout the school. Staff remain uncertain about what might constitute a safeguarding concern, how to act and how promptly.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- This part of the standards remains unmet.

Statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage

3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7

- At the previous inspection, it was found that aspects of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the early years statutory framework were not in place. This was because the safeguarding weaknesses evident in the rest of the school also applied in the early years.
- There are still significant weaknesses in safeguarding practices and procedures in the school, as described in part 3 and part 8 of this report. These weaknesses also apply in the early years and so these aspects of the early years statutory framework remain 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. 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	134424
DfE registration number	872/6013
Inspection number	10139485

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	25
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	The trustees of the Vine Christian School (Reading)
Chair	Mr Michael Spooner
Headteacher	Mrs René Esterhuizen
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,050 – £5,475
Telephone number	01189886464
Website	www.vinechristianschool.org.uk
Email address	office@thevcs.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	25–27 June 2019

Information about this school

- The 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 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's core curriculum follows the 'accelerated Christian education' 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, personal, social, health and economic education, physical education and Spanish.
- The school consists of four classes. These are a pre-school for nursery-aged children, a reception class, called ABC class, and a junior and senior class.
- 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 school uses no alternative provision.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2019. She is also the designated safeguarding lead.
- The last standard inspection took place in June 2019, when the school was judged inadequate.

Information about this inspection

- On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspection, Ofsted implemented an 'interim phase' from autumn 2020. As part of this phase, Ofsted is carrying out additional inspections in line with our usual arrangements.
- 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 any previously unmet standards in parts 2 to 8 of the independent school standards, and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. Because this inspection was conducted during the interim phase, the DfE did not commission a check of the requirements of part 1. Similarly, unmet early years learning and development requirements (paragraph 2) were not checked.
- The last inspection of this school was a standard inspection in June 2019. At this inspection, the school was judged not to comply with the independent school standards.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection. It was carried out with 30 minutes' notice.
- The DfE required the school to produce a statutory action plan detailing the steps that would be taken to meet the unmet standards. On the DfE's behalf, Ofsted evaluated the action plan on 28 November 2019. Taking account of that assessment, the DfE took the decision on behalf of the Secretary of State to reject the action plan.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, the chair of trustees and a member of staff. She spoke to two groups of pupils. She examined updated arrangements for safeguarding pupils and reviewed other documents and records relating to the relevant independent school standards.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

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 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 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'. 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.

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection, and have not been checked during this inspection.

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(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 standards 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.

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.

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