

Inspection of The Branch Christian School

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

Inspection dates: 6–8 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

A caring and respectful atmosphere permeates this school. Pupils say that teachers care about them. Relationships between staff and pupils are mutually respectful. Pupils say that they know each other well and one pupil said that 'school is like a big family'. Pupils like coming to school. They say that it is a safe place to be. Pupils enjoy helping one another. They say that 'kindness is a good thing to have'.

Pupils are well behaved. Expectations of pupils are high. Staff support pupils with their behaviour and welfare, in a positive and consistent way. Pupils told inspectors that bullying does not happen. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns.

Staff are deeply committed to the school and to the pupils. Parents are positive and supportive of the school. One parent said, 'The staff are amazingly dedicated and my daughter loves going to school.'

Leaders know that they need to improve some aspects of the work of the school. This includes the planning of the wider 'complementary' curriculum, the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the school and ensuring that science work matches to children's needs and abilities in the early years.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The proprietors and headteacher have a clear vision. They want pupils to achieve the best that they can and be well prepared to go on to further education, employment, or training. Conversations with staff confirm that this vision is shared across the school.

Pupils are offered a broad enough range of subjects. They study English, mathematics, social science, history, geography, science, physical education, music, German, art and craft and careers education. English, mathematics and science are delivered through Packets of Accelerated Christian Education (PACES), as part of the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme. This work is well sequenced and ordered, with the result that pupils make progress across their subjects.

Pupils work diligently through their English, mathematics and science books every morning. They work hard. Pupils can explain what they are learning and they remember what they have done before. Pupils know what to do if they find the work difficult. They patiently 'raise a flag' to indicate that they need help. No time is wasted, as pupils start an alternative piece of work while they are waiting for help to arrive. Pupils check their own work at regular intervals. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are offered a step-by-step approach to learning, to meet their specific needs.

In the early years, children get off to a good start with learning about letters and sounds. Phonics-based activities take place every day to get them ready to read. Children sing action songs and listen to stories to promote a love of reading. Some Reception children are fluent readers. One child read aloud 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea' and explained what was happening in the pictures.

Work seen in the practical science books of children in the early years was too difficult for them to understand. There was a mismatch between the work planned and children's understanding. Some children were not able to form letters to copy the sentence presented to them and the content of the work was too challenging.

Reading is a central part of the curriculum. Leaders have recently developed a library where pupils can borrow books to take home. An 'author of the week' display introduces pupils to different books and writers. Pupils say that they enjoy reading. They read regularly to an adult.

Pupils are prepared for their next steps into education, employment or training. They receive independent careers advice to help them to reach their goals and aspirations. Past pupils have gone on to sixth-form colleges, apprenticeships and university.

The quality of the wider 'complementary' curriculum, delivered in the afternoons, is not good. Learning opportunities are not well chosen or well sequenced. For example, in science, learning jumps quickly between topics. This does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop their knowledge and secure a deep understanding. This is evident when speaking with pupils. They struggle to recall subject knowledge from the science experiments that they have conducted. In English, plans are not clear enough to show how knowledge builds over time. Leaders have a clear plan of what they want pupils to know in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Subject knowledge has been planned and ordered carefully so that pupils make progress. Knowledge builds year-on-year so that pupils remember important things.

The school is an inclusive community. Pupils understand how to respect others. Pupils share their experiences of their different faiths and cultures. Pupils develop strong moral values of right and wrong. They discuss different points of view around issues such as abortion and euthanasia. They know that other people may have different opinions to themselves. Pupils know what the protected characteristics are because they have studied the Equality Act 2010. They understand that people should be treated fairly. Pupils can explain what the fundamental British values of democracy, liberty, respect and tolerance are. They are knowledgeable about what they mean.

The headteacher has made improvements to the school since her appointment. Safeguarding arrangements have been put in place. Staff have received training in safeguarding and in curriculum development. Careers advice and guidance is

now supporting pupils with their preparation for life after school. The school has moved forwards since the previous inspection.

The proprietor body and governing body are highly involved in the life of the school. They are deeply committed to supporting the pupils and the staff. Some governors volunteer to teach regularly in the school. Governors have shared out their roles and responsibilities.

Currently, leaders do not have any means by which to measure their effectiveness as part of their routine business processes. Consequently, they do not have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to know what the most important priorities are for the school to continue to improve.

The proprietor body has ensured that the independent school Standards and the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage have been met. Leaders have put in place a three-year accessibility plan. This plan sets out how the school will meet the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a safeguarding policy in place and that it meets with government guidance. The policy is available to parents on the school's website.

Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding makes sure that governors are up to date with their training.

Processes for recruiting staff enable leaders to check that prospective employees are safe to work in the school. Leaders do not intend to use supply staff, but they are aware of their responsibilities if they do so in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There is variation in how well curriculum leaders plan what pupils should learn in the 'complementary' subjects and in the early years. In some subjects, for example science and English, it is not clear what teachers want pupils to learn, to build on the knowledge that they already have. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum plans for all 'complementary' subjects are coherent and well sequenced.
- In the early years the work that is planned for children in practical science lessons is not well matched to their abilities. This means that the subject

knowledge is too difficult for them to understand. Leaders should ensure that the work planned in science meets children's needs and abilities.

- Leaders do not currently carry out any school evaluation as part of their usual business practice. This means that the headteacher and governors do not have an accurate view of what the priorities for school improvement are. Leaders should ensure that they establish a means by which they can monitor and evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	107795
DfE registration number	382/6018
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10192276
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	19
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Dewsbury Gospel Church
Chair	Stephen Hodgson
Headteacher	Jill Holt
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,384
Telephone number	01924 452511
Website	www.branchchristianschool.org.uk
Email address	office@branchchristianschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–22 November 2018

Information about this school

- The school's previous standard inspection was in November 2018, when overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place in June 2019, when the school met all of the independent school standards that were checked during the inspection.
- The Branch Christian School is a Christian independent day school for boys and girls aged three to 18. The school has an open admissions policy.
- There are currently 19 pupils on roll, aged between four and 16. There are no students in the sixth form.
- The headteacher was appointed in February 2019.
- The school does not make use of any alternative education providers.
- Pupils follow the ACE curriculum. Secondary pupils work towards achieving the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE).

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the representatives of the proprietor board and the governing body, the headteacher and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, reading, mathematics, science and PSHE. Deep dive activities included discussions with leaders, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- An inspector met with the headteacher to look at the single central record. Policies and records relating to safeguarding were checked.
- A tour of the premises took place to check on Part 5 and Part 3 of the independent school standards. A range of documents and policies were looked at in relation to all of the independent school standards.
- There were eight responses to Ofsted's free-text survey for parents. Other parents were spoken with on the telephone and at the school.

Inspection team

Suzette Garland-Grimes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Pearce	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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