

Cornerstone School

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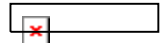
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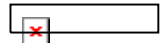
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Introduction and summary

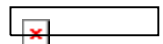


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

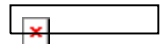
Information about the school



Cornerstone School is an independent Christian co-educational school, opened in 1988. It is affiliated to Epsom Christian Fellowship, an evangelical church, and is held in the church premises and run by a board of governors. There are currently 41 pupils aged 4 to 16 years, one of whom has a statement of special educational need (SEN). Epsom Christian Fellowship believes that the Bible teaches that the education of children is the responsibility of parents. Parents, together with some church members staff the school and share their expertise to educate the pupils. All staff work voluntarily.

The school exists to help parents give their children a Christian education. Their vision is for 'a place with an atmosphere full of the love and wisdom of God.'

Summary of main findings



Cornerstone School is a successful school and achieves its objective of providing a Bible-based

education for its pupils. It provides a good quality education with a well-balanced curriculum, and the good teaching enables pupils to make admirable progress. It is a friendly, purposeful community where pupils are happy and very well behaved and parents are directly and actively involved in their children's education

What the school does well

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- its Christian beliefs successfully underpin much of its good practice;
- it benefits greatly from the active involvement of its parents;
- it provides a caring, family atmosphere where pupils are valued as individuals, and as a result they behave very responsibly;
- it is a valued part of the church community and instils a sense of spiritual and moral purpose into the personal development and future lives of its pupils;
- the curriculum provides a good range of activities for its pupils and it is taught well; and
- it enables the pupils to achieve at their full potential.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

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- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of staff, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and qualifications and ensure that this information is taken into account when the appointment is confirmed. (paragraph 4(c)).

Next steps

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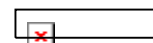
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- include more formally a design element in the technology curriculum; and
- extend the use of literacy prompts in subjects such as science and ICT.

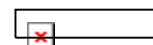
Compliance with the regulations for registration

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1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school's curriculum is generally good, its policy briefly outlines its ideals of Christian education. It is supported effectively by some carefully planned schemes of work, which relate the school's curricular aims to its 'Biblical ethos'.

The infant class has a well-balanced curriculum with an emphasis on practical learning activities, and with good teaching of reading through effective programmes, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Juniors spend about half of their time on self-instructional work using appropriate commercial schemes. Lower juniors use parts of the American-based Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum for English and for Science, supplemented by a suitable commercial mathematics scheme. The upper juniors work on self-instructional commercial schemes for English and Mathematics and complete individual work booklets in ACE Science and Social Studies, with lessons in other subjects taught by teachers.

All subjects are supported by appropriate schemes of work, which provide the basis for teachers' more detailed planning. They contain aims which are clearly expressed in line with the school's beliefs, including alerting 'students to anti-Christian elements in humanism, relativism and evolution'. The scheme of work for information and communication technology (ICT) successfully links these aims to the school's ethos, describing computers as morally neutral, capable of use for good or ill. It identifies the main topics required and includes the new Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) course materials. The scheme of work for technology includes cooking from Years 3 to 7, but lacks explicit inclusion of any design element.

Information from the Connexions agency on careers education is made available to senior pupils. Year 10 pupils spend a short time each week on the Internet researching careers. They maintain and print out a careers log, which outlines where they have looked and what items they have found useful, discussing this with the headteacher.

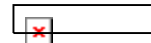
As all staff are voluntary, the range of subjects provided is dependant upon on who is available to teach. The school is reviewing its Christian foundation for all areas, for example assessing how technology can be further incorporated into the curriculum and whether French might be added to the current provision of German. To date this approach has resulted in a broad and balanced curriculum, albeit with some less well established areas of study.

Extra-curricular provision is seen as the responsibility of parents, and the school helps parents to fulfil that responsibility. Currently it consists of evangelical youth work, rock-climbing for senior pupils, and the church's outreach choir, as well as a range of social service activities, including visiting the elderly.

Appropriate curricular provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties. The records and reviews completed by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) are good and ensure that the school's curriculum provides opportunities for all its pupils to learn and to make progress.

Although there is no formal personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, there are parts of the curriculum where much of the content of a conventional PSHE course is covered, including citizenship. The citizenship elements, the extra-curricular activities and the careers education combine to prepare pupils well for their future responsibilities and experiences. The school maintains details of the progress of ex-pupils in their careers, and keeps actively in touch gaining valuable feedback from sustained contact with them.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Staff are well qualified and contribute a broad range of expertise and experience. Most lessons observed were almost all carefully planned by the teachers and taught with purposeful enthusiasm. Teachers generally share their learning intentions with the pupils at the beginning of each lesson. Good use of questioning skills encourages pupils to talk about the subject, helping them to develop clear thinking, speaking and listening skills. Lessons move at a brisk pace with pupils given very good individual support by teachers and other adults working with them. They are careful to ensure that the pupils understand the work they are doing before they move on.

Teachers know the pupils extremely well and are aware of their capabilities. Relationships are very positive at all levels. All pupils apply effort in their work and display a responsible attitude towards learning. They feel that their teachers take care to help them with their work. Good classroom routines are securely established and underpin the effective learning environment. The ACE lessons are well supervised with teachers and other adults taking an active lead in supporting pupils and interpreting the content of the materials.

The school has a reasonably wide range of resources and these are used effectively to support learning. Attractive displays around the school enhance pupils' work and encourage them to feel it is valued.

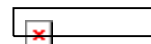
Those who find learning difficult are given additional support in class and some pupils are withdrawn for individual help. The SENCO makes useful notes, in conjunction with parents, which identify the next steps for the pupils and are used informatively by teachers to support them in lessons. Pupils with special needs are supported well; for example in an ICT lesson pupils with dyslexia were helped to find strategies to remember their ICT password. Other effective strategies include the use of songs to assist with the learning of formulae, as with the "Trigonometry Song" in a Year 9 lesson. The school has made a start with the provision of literacy prompts in mathematics but these have not yet been extended to science and ICT.

The school has a good policy for assessment. Teachers use an effective range of procedures to record pupils' progress. They know what the pupils can do and what they need to do next to help them move forward in their learning. Much of the assessment is informal but the school makes use of a wide range of internal tests, standardised tests and end-of-unit tests. In ACE, work is self-tested under strict supervision. End-of-year examinations take place from Year 8. The accumulated information is used to build up an accurate picture of each pupil's achievements. Detailed reports are written for all pupils at the end of the summer term, with an additional report for senior pupils in the spring term, when a parents' evening is held. This received explicit and positive mention in the parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school provides very well for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. A school assembly observed was based on the sayings of Christ as reported in the Gospels and was related to pupils' self-worth and value encouraging pupils not to worry unduly. Such experiences

help to increase pupils' self-knowledge and confidence.

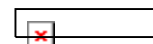
Senior pupils are given appropriate responsibility. For example, they look after junior pupils during lunch, which is a relaxed and important part of the school day. Pupils' behaviour around the school is very sensible; pupils move from place to place in an orderly manner.

The school's curricular provision provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services. The newly-developed citizenship scheme of work includes human rights, legal rights, conflict in the community, including racism and a study of multi-culturalism in Britain. In religious education pupils are introduced to the variety and richness of life in the United Kingdom as a multi-faith society, including differences amongst Christians in their attitude to other religions. There are opportunities in both history and geography to study Britain's relations with Europe and the world. The school has a clear aim of ensuring that pupils can distinguish right from wrong. There is a focus on law and order and the British judicial system.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The school takes the necessary steps to ensure that it is a safe place in which to work and learn. Pupils are properly and well supervised at all times. School policies comply with all of the key requirements for pupils' welfare, health and safety, and support these with very detailed risk assessments.

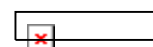
There is appropriate provision for First Aid, with two staff qualified to administer it. There is a suitable school behaviour policy and pupils behave well. Bullying policies are in place and pupils report that there is no bullying at this school. There is an appropriate child protection policy in line with local authority arrangements. The school has written records of serious disciplinary offences and of the sanctions taken. Attendance and admission registers are in order.

The school has made good provision for fire safety. Risk assessment forms are completed in great detail. The fire officer commented positively last year on the fire risk assessment. The fire drill book is up-to-date and contains good evaluative comments on past fire drills. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002: It has taken the first steps towards fitting a toilet for the disabled and is submitting written plans to take this provision further.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school is a charitable trust, managed by a board of governors. The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the headteacher who teaches almost full-time. Parents and some church members teach at the school, most of them are well qualified. Together they bring a wide

range of expertise and experience to the school.

The school has carried out checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm the suitability of the staff to work with children. It is still waiting for some staff to be cleared, and until this happens, the school ensures that they do not work alone with pupils.

To date, the school has only employed staff who are members of the church and are very well known to both the congregation and the school governors. No formal procedures have been carried out to check the identity, qualifications, and medical fitness of staff and the school has not taken up references for staff prior to their appointment. It plans to make such checks in any future appointments.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

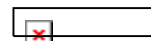
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of staff, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and qualifications and ensure that this information is taken into account when the appointment is confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



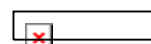
The premises and accommodation are suitable for their purpose. The school is held in the Epsom Christian Fellowship Church, which has been appropriately adapted with seven classrooms, most of which are of a generous size. Two classrooms are used as 'learning centres' for younger pupils, where they follow the ACE curriculum. Much of the school has recently been refurbished and the infant classroom has been made very attractive with a range of cupboards to store resources. The school is fortunate in having a large hall which is used for assembly, games and physical education lessons. In addition, there is an art and craft room, a science laboratory, a kitchen used for cookery lessons and an attractive computer suite with up-to-date computers. There is a small outdoor play area and the school uses an adjacent park and sports centre for additional sports activities.

The school premises are well maintained, clean and tidy. All the classrooms are equipped with suitable furniture and fittings. Toilet facilities are good.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



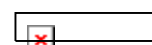
The quality of information for parents is good. The open communication with parents is central to

the life of the school. It produces an informative prospectus, which contains details about the curriculum and the Christian education it offers. There is also a helpfully detailed parents' information booklet and a comprehensive file that contains additional policies. A notice board and the 'communication envelope' which pupils take home each day help to keep everyone up-to-date with the life and work of the school. Parents are welcome to come and speak to the headteacher at the beginning and end of the day. Most parents responded to the questionnaire sent out to them before the inspection. They showed a high level of satisfaction with the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

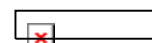


The school has a clear complaints procedure, which sets out in detail all the correct stages for informal and formal resolution of complaints. Parents are given a copy when their children start at the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Cornerstone School		
DfES ref number:	936/6558		
Type of school:	Christian		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	4 - 16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 19,	Girls 22,	Total 41
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 1,	Girls 0,	Total 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	£360		
Address of school:	22 West Hill		
	Epsom		
	Surrey		
	KT19 8JD		
E-mail address:	Admin@cornerstoneschool.org.uk		
Telephone number:	01372 742940		
Fax number:	01372 742940		
Headteacher:	Mr G R Davies		
Proprietor:	Epsom Christian Fellowship Trust		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection:	17 - 20 January 2005		

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