

7 December 2006

Inspection report

Immanuel School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 311/6060

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 20-23 November 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

Immanuel School is a co-educational school for boys and girls from 3 to 16 years of age. It is housed in a former local authority school near Romford in Essex. At the time of the inspection, there were 120 full-time pupils and 3 children, of below compulsory school age, who attend part time. The school's origins go back to 1980 when the Acorn School was created by the leaders of the Romford Christian fellowship, which later became Immanuel Ministries. The Acorn School moved to its current premises in 1990 along with the Covenant School, an independent Christian secondary school. The two schools were combined to form the Immanuel School in 1993 and the school is now owned and led by Immanuel Ministries.

The school seeks to teach children about the nature, work and purposes of God, as understood by the Christian tradition. The school is strongly based on the beliefs, principles and values of the charismatic, evangelical wing of the Christian church. The school's vision of a Christian education and its central goal are encapsulated in its vision statement: *'Children who know God and are equipped to live in the light of that knowledge.'* The school leaders want parents who send their children to the school to share this vision. It is also *'committed to preparing children for life today, so that they are equipped emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and socially to face all of life's joys and challenges.'*

Summary of main findings

The school is particularly successful both in its provision for pupils' personal development and in its capacity to enable its pupils to achieve well academically. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils are very well behaved, self-disciplined, polite and friendly. The school provides a safe, very caring and well-ordered environment in which pupils are happy and able to learn and flourish. Pupils achieve above average standards in public examinations at the end of Year 11.

The curriculum is broad and balanced in most respects. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is generally good. Parents are very satisfied with the education the school provides, but both they and the pupils would like more extra-curricular activities, especially sporting links with other schools.

What the school does well:

- it creates an orderly and well-disciplined but warm family atmosphere in which learning can take place;
- it provides well for vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities;
- its pupils make good progress;
- its staff form strong and supportive relationships with their pupils and know them very well; and
- its teachers are successful in fostering pupils' enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes towards learning.

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

- develop a curriculum policy and an effective framework for evaluating pupil performance as indicated in section 1 of the report; and
- attend to the welfare issues identified in section 3.

Next Steps

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

- establish links with other schools which permit the sharing and development of expertise;
- provide further opportunities for teachers to improve their teaching skills;
- provide pupils with opportunities to engage in competitive sporting and other activities with pupils from other schools;
- review the provision for early years to provide more opportunities for children to develop independent learning skills; and
- ensure there is more effective subject guidance for safeguarding children.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

Immanuel School provides a satisfactory curriculum for its pupils. Pupils are offered an appropriate range of subjects with a generally good balance of time given to each. The provision for design technology in years 7 to 11 is limited as pupils do not have experiences in working with resistant materials. Pupils also feel the number of subjects offered at GCSE is limited and that there are insufficient opportunities to engage in competitive sport. The school does not offer pupils the opportunity to go swimming, which is a weakness in the physical education (PE) programme. The curriculum provides pupils with satisfactory support for their academic, physical and personal development. Schemes of work are variable in quality, but satisfactory overall. These provide teachers with an appropriate basis for their planning and reinforce the school's Christian ethos. However, there is currently no written curriculum policy which sets out in general terms how each subject is to be taught or how work will be planned to meet the needs of all pupils. In this respect the school does not meet requirements. Subject matter is generally suitably matched to the ages and aptitudes of the pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress and achieve good standards by the time they leave the school.

There is good provision for pupils who have learning disabilities and difficulties. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Provision for children in the nursery/reception classes is satisfactory. Although planning does not make reference to the areas of learning for children under five, the activities offered do cover these areas and ensure that all children make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Nearly all children achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

The curriculum is enhanced by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. These include visits to places of interest, residential trips both in the United Kingdom and abroad. However, pupils and parents feel that the number of out-of-school activities are limited and pupils in particular would like more sporting interaction with other schools. Effective use is made of the local area to support learning in history, environmental studies and art.. Good use is also made of the local community and services, such as the police and the fire service.

Pupils' personal development is good because the school places a high priority on this aspect. The school is committed to providing '*a secure environment which enables children to know and understand God, the world and each other from a Christian perspective*'. The effective 'Faith into Action' programme enables pupils to learn about key risks, important social issues and how to behave responsibly in an adult environment. Pupil's good behaviour and positive attitudes shows that they enjoy school very much. House Captains make a valuable contribution to school life by organising events for their houses and conducting group Bible studies. Older pupils show initiative and have appropriate opportunities for independent learning. However, in the nursery/reception class there are insufficient opportunities for

children to use their own initiative, make informed choices or apply their skills in child-led activities.

Pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy are well developed and prepare them effectively for the next stages of their education. Older pupils are provided with effective careers advice in partnership with the local authority careers advisory service. Pupils say they feel well prepared for leaving the school and going on to the next phase of their life.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory, with some good teaching. Teaching for children below compulsory school age is satisfactory. Lessons are effectively organised and good use is made of the learning support assistant to supervise the learning of the youngest children. However, planning does not give a sufficient indication of what skills children will acquire or how the lesson will build on previous learning. There are also insufficient opportunities for children to initiate their own learning. Resources are adequate, appropriate to the needs of the children and used well in lessons. Effective use is now being made of assessment and there is a developing system to track children's progress in literacy, numeracy and key skills.

Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall. Lessons are planned carefully with a satisfactory range of resources, but there is limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons and through the curriculum. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to engage and involve pupils. Because relationships are good and there is firm discipline, lessons run smoothly and often at a brisk pace. Classrooms are orderly and purposeful places, often with a quiet hum of focused learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Most teachers have clear objectives for their lessons, which they share with their pupils and check that they understand, but occasionally they are less helpful, setting out merely what they are to do. Explanations are usually clear and prepare the pupils effectively for the learning activities.

Pupils are often encouraged to work together, to share their ideas and develop their planning. Tasks are interesting, varied and closely matched to the lesson objectives. Teachers check pupils' progress carefully through the lesson, providing support and challenge where necessary. Pupils respond well, concentrating throughout and usually doing their best. The end of lessons is usually used carefully to check understanding, consolidate knowledge and prepare pupils for what they are to do next. At times, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, more able pupils are asked to complete the same work as others in the class before moving on to more relevant activities, which hampers their otherwise good progress. Occasionally teachers' explanations as to what pupils are to do are unclear and this leads to some pupils becoming frustrated and tearful.

The quality of teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory. The strong and supportive relationships that exist between the teachers and the pupils foster mutual respect and good behaviour in almost all lessons. The teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and respond confidently to the questions the students ask. On

entering the classrooms, the pupils settle quickly to work, remain attentive throughout the lesson and are mature and responsive in their answers to questions from the teacher. An example of good questioning involved the teacher using effective questions and prompts to encourage pupils to draw on their previous learning to answer questions correctly. The work the pupils are asked to do usually takes sufficient account of the different abilities in the class. This provision has a positive impact and enables most to achieve well.

In the best lessons the teachers provide good opportunities for the pupils to learn in different ways, including from information provided by the teacher and textbooks, through practical activities and from discussions with each other. In these lessons, the teachers make it clear what knowledge, understanding and skills are to be acquired and developed. In less strong lessons, although adequately planned and the teachers are clear about what it is they want the pupils to learn, they are less successful in articulating its objectives to enable pupils to be clear about what they are expected to have achieved by the end of the lesson.

A distinctive feature of the lessons across the curriculum is the regular practice of introducing a spiritual element. This involves the teacher asking, for each lesson, *'What would God be saying about this subject?'* and then making a connection between the subject content of the lesson and a specifically Christian religious or moral idea. This was observed, for example, in a mathematics lesson on probability when pupils considered a spectrum of possibilities from what might be certain to what would be impossible which allowed pupils to reflect on the idea that *'with God nothing is impossible.'*

The school's appraisal of the teacher's work is effectively linked to its practice of monitoring of teaching. As a result it is better able to identify the necessary training to improve the professional skills of the staff. The lesson observations undertaken by school leaders are not yet as rigorous as they could be to provide teachers with robust feedback and a clear judgement on the quality of their teaching.

Assessment is satisfactory overall and teachers' record keeping is up-to-date. The assessment of pupils with potential learning disabilities and difficulties is good. There are robust systems for parents and teachers to express concerns about children and early diagnosis ensures that pupils are given appropriate support. The Special Needs Co-ordinator uses standardised tests effectively to measure pupils' progress and to diagnose specific learning difficulties. Support for pupils whose mother tongue is not English is also good and the school makes effective use of local education authority guidance to assess pupils and ensure they have work which is well matched to their needs. Although no pupils currently have statements of special educational needs, the school has secure procedures for dealing with any such pupils if required. Effective systems at Key Stage 4 enable the pupils to make good progress and to achieve good standards in public examinations. The marking of the pupils' work is satisfactory with some good examples seen. The pupils feel that they receive helpful comments on their work which enables them to have a clear idea about what they need to do to improve.

Procedures for evaluating pupils' performance in relation to their potential and in relation to national norms are underdeveloped. The school follows a deliberate

policy of not using standard national tests at the end of Years 2, 6 and 9. The school has only just begun to use data and other information to identify pupils' capabilities and potential. Despite existing plans to develop more effective measures in this respect to support pupils, this aspect of provision is still inadequate and does not yet meet the requirement.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most of the requirements.

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:

- *devise a curriculum policy (paragraph 1(2)) and*
- *produce a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).*

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is supported effectively by the school's Christian ethos, which is woven throughout the curriculum. There are appropriate opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer in lessons and assemblies. Pupils are taught to reflect on a range of spiritual and moral issues, and aspects of the human condition, such as care for the environment. There is a very strong emphasis on appropriate social behaviour and pupils report there is almost no bullying. Good behaviour is reinforced in lessons, assemblies and through other aspects of teaching. The personal, social and citizenship education programme, 'Faith into Action', introduces pupils to British public institutions, such as Parliament, while a range of visitors from public services have visited the school.

Pupils are given several responsibilities around the school, which they undertake with enthusiasm. House Captains play an important role in re-enforcing the school's ethos, as well as carrying out practical duties. Pupils raise money for charities and good causes of their choice. The curriculum supports pupils' cultural awareness well. Pupils of all ages enjoy performing a number of musical and drama performances each year, and there is a well-constructed programme of visits to places of interest, such as museums and democratic institutions. Pupils learn French from Year 7 and the Biblical Studies programme introduces pupils to the main religions represented in contemporary British culture.

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 the pupils is mostly good and some elements are excellent. There are a range of policies in place, which are communicated to staff and pupils and fulfil most of the requirements. Although annual training on child protection procedures is provided for staff, the principal as the designated child protection officer has not yet attended up-to-date training in line with the Department for Education and Skills guidance. Arrangements are in place for this to take place in the Spring term 2007. The school's child protection policy needs to be more explicit about when referrals should be made to social services, in accordance with locally agreed inter-agency procedures. Procedures for ensuring internet safety in the child protection policy are underdeveloped.

The care provided for pupils is good. Relationships in the school are good and pupils of all ages speak very highly of the care and support shown to them by staff. Parents are generally positive about the school, one parent referring to the school's 'caring atmosphere'. Pupils behave well in and around the school. 'Clear and consistent discipline' is one of the school's stated values. The anti-bullying policy is effective. There have been very few incidents of bullying and pupils are confident about speaking with staff should they have any concerns. Staff in turn respond effectively to any concerns raised. Support for vulnerable pupils is good with appropriate records being maintained. Supervision for pupils is satisfactory.

There is a clear and implemented policy on pupils' health and safety on school outings. Risk assessments are completed prior to outings, although the guidance for pupils who go on work experience is less developed. General health and safety guidance is provided for staff, although there is too little specific subject guidance in science, such as the requirement to wear eye protection for experiments. The school ensures fire safety with regular documented fire drills. Fire appliances are checked annually. The school has responded to improvements identified during the last fire inspection report and has carried out a recent fire assessment.

There is appropriate provision for First Aid with sufficient staff qualified to administer it. First Aid boxes are appropriately stocked and are taken on school outings. Accidents are recorded. Medicines are properly stored and there is a clear policy for their administration. The school fulfils its duties in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has a specific policy for meeting the needs of pupils with disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most of the requirements.

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:

- *ensure that the designated child protection officer receives appropriate training every two years (paragraph 3(2)(b)); and*

- *ensure that arrangements for health and safety in lessons are complied with (paragraph 3(4)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff and those working as volunteers have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for their suitability to work with children. Four CRB checks are in the process of being completed. References are taken up to make sure that employees are fit for the job that they undertake, identity checks are carried out and suitable enquiries are made to check their employment history.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises are a satisfactory environment for teaching and learning. The building is solid and in a good state of repair. The exterior of the school is in good condition. It has a ramp to the playground, disabled access to most classrooms and the hall, a disabled toilet and access to showers. Sound insulation and acoustics, lighting and ventilation are generally good. There are sufficient washrooms which are kept in a satisfactory condition.

Classrooms are of sufficient size for the number of pupils. They have appropriate furniture, fittings and floor coverings. Classrooms and corridors are clean and tidy and displays show evidence of pupils' work. The school is improving has recently invested in developing resources for library reading. The science laboratory is satisfactorily equipped. The playground and grassed play area at the rear of the school provide adequate space for physical activity, recreation and play.

The hall is used for lessons including PE and at lunch time, as well as for the Parents and Toddlers group which meets in the hall on Wednesdays during the school day. This group is seen as a very important development in the school, building links with prospective parents and enabling older pupils as part of their work experience to work with younger children. The kitchen off the hall is off-limits to pupils but is not always kept locked during the school day.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The information, which the school provides as a matter of course for parents and prospective parents, meets all of the regulations. The school prospectus makes it clear what further information is available on request.

The admission and attendance registers are kept according to current regulations. The annual reports to parents are satisfactory. For younger pupils they provide some detail about the progress the pupils are making English and mathematics but limited information in relation to other subjects. Reports for secondary age pupils contain more detailed information on all subjects taught and include the pupil's own assessment of their progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a brief written complaints policy which sets out the procedures it will follow in the management of any complaint. It contains information on all of the specific elements required by the regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

Name of school: Immanuel school
DfES Number: 311/6060
Type of school: Faith (Christian)
Status: Independent
Age range of pupils: 3 – 16 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils): Boys: 70 Girls: 50 Total: 120
Number on roll (part-time pupils): Boys: 3 Girls: 0 Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils): £3720
Address of school: Havering Grange
Havering Road
Romford
RM1 4HR
Telephone number: 01708 764449
Fax number: 01708 738114
Email address: immanuelschool@immanuelministries.org.uk
Headteacher: Miss Fiona Norcross
Proprietor: Dr Ian Grant
Reporting Inspector: Ian Hartland HMI
Date of inspection: 20-23 November 2006

© Crown copyright 2006. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

School inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The website lists Ofsted independent school inspection reports, together with information on the work Ofsted does in the independent sector.