

Inspection report
Handsworth Christian School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 373/6026

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 9 - 12 October 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

The school was established in 1986 under the direction of the Handsworth Full Gospel Church, now the Sheffield Christian Life Centre, which maintains an interest and involvement in the running of the school.

The senior management team and governors are evangelical Christians and the school aims to provide a distinctly Christian education, with Christian values and morals underpinning the curriculum.

The school community reflects the ethnic diversity of the local community and around 20% of pupils are of minority ethnic origins. Handsworth Christian School is non-selective and welcomes pupils of other faiths whose parents welcome the moral basis of Christian teaching, the high standards of care and close monitoring of behaviour.

A wide geographical area is served by the school with pupils travelling from various parts of Sheffield, Rotherham and the surrounding villages. The school has an after-school club which currently is not registered.

Summary of main findings

Handsworth Christian School provides pupils with a well-rounded effective education. The quality of the curriculum and teaching is satisfactory. The monitoring of pupil's progress and the use of assessment is inadequate. Pupils attain above average standards in GCSE examinations by the time they leave the school. The school is a disciplined community which offers a sound education based upon traditional values. Pupils enjoy school; they feel safe and appreciate their teacher's academic support but are concerned that the school does not always listen to their views. Teachers set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond well. They develop good relationships with each other. The accommodation has some limitations but is well managed.

What the school does well:

- it enables pupils to achieve above average pass rates in GCSE examinations;
- it provides carefully for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- it manages the pupils' behaviour effectively;

- it cares conscientiously for the pupils' health and safety;
- it develops thoroughly the pupils' basic skills;
- it provides good support for pupils with special educational needs; and
- it has extended the curriculum to broaden the pupils' experiences.

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

- ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress.

Next Steps

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

- ensure that its after-school club is registered with the DfES.
- raise the quality of satisfactory teaching to match the good practice found in the school;
- increase the expectations of what the highest attaining pupils can do;
- create opportunities for the views of pupils and parents to be considered by the school; and
- improve planning in the lower school so that pupils' progress is ensured in all subjects.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The prospectus sets out clearly the school's values and aims for its curriculum. In its aims and objectives the prospectus commits the school to providing pupils with an education which helps them to reach their full potential. Provision for pupils in the Reception class is good and planning is firmly based on national guidance for this age group. Most subjects of the National Curriculum and religious studies are provided; although there is little provision for design and technology, except in Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6. Spanish is taught throughout the school. Sufficient time is allocated to subjects with appropriate time given to literacy and numeracy each day. The timetable is broad and balanced. The curriculum is extended with Scripture, chess and sign language.

There are policies and schemes of work for each subject. Subject planning is not sufficiently extensive in setting out what will be taught, how and when. However, planning becomes more rigorous as pupils move to the Upper School. In the Lower school, planning has some regard to the National Curriculum in literacy and numeracy. The school also uses commercial schemes; although it is unclear how these are linked to enable pupils to make good progress in literacy and numeracy. Planning for topic work is unsatisfactory in the Lower School. There is no overview of how history or geography are to be taught to ensure progression in what pupils know, understand and can do. This leads to subjects being taught on an ad hoc basis.

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good. The school has a suitable range of computers and printers. All age groups are timetabled to use the computers each week.

The school has good procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Pupils are given effective support by class teachers and by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Individual education plans have appropriate targets, but these are not reviewed as frequently as they should be. Parents are fully involved when a pupil is first identified as needing extra support.

There is good provision for extra curricular activities. Currently, the pupils can attend art, French and chess clubs. At other times, there is provision for music, mathematics and football clubs. There is an after school club caring for a small number of children: at present this is not registered with the Department for Education and Skills. Out-of-school visits are planned to broaden the pupils' horizons and promote their understanding of topics taught in school, for example, a geography GCSE fieldwork trip to Castleton, Derbyshire. The Upper School takes an excursion abroad every two years. Recently, the pupils visited Spain which provided an opportunity to practise their Spanish speaking skills.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of the teaching is satisfactory and ranges from satisfactory to good. In the older classes (above age 11), especially those with a focus upon preparation for GCSE examinations, teaching is consistently good. Pupils of all ages, aptitudes and abilities make satisfactory progress and achieve well. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

There is a predominance of formal teaching styles. For the older pupils this is combined with strong specialist teacher subject knowledge, a good use of assessment and effective targets set for pupils which they know and understand how to achieve. In the youngest classes (below age 11), lesson planning builds insufficiently upon what pupils already know. Too often learning objectives for pupils are too imprecise, especially for those who are the highest attaining. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to extend their learning: this was seen in a lesson about measuring in the lower school, where practical cutting and sticking skills took precedence over developing pupils' mathematical understanding and vocabulary. In the best lessons pupils are suitably challenged by very good questioning techniques used by the teachers, here pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. Where teacher expectations are too low, pupils are passive in their learning and there are limited opportunities for them to explore and discover for themselves. For example, in a science lesson where teachers conducted an experiment to demonstrate how to separate a mixture, the pupils watched as observers and the follow up activity focused upon drawing the equipment used.

Teachers know their pupils well, classes are small and informal assessment is effective in developing pupils' learning. There are formal standardised assessments for pupils in some year groups but this is at an early stage of implementation and does not yet provide a means of measuring pupils' progress over time. Consequently there is insufficient rigour to monitoring pupils' progress and inconsistencies in the effective use of pupils' targets. Nevertheless, pupils achieve GCSE exam successes which are well above average nationally.

The school has adequate resources in most areas and subjects. Computers make a good contribution to pupils' learning particularly in developing individual study and research skills. The wireless network of laptop computers is especially well used by pupils studying for external exams.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the regulations.

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 pupils' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly and is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1 (3)(g)).*

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

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff set very high expectations of behaviour which the pupils meet well. There is a strong sense of discipline and high moral values are effectively promoted through the role models of all adults in the school. The school makes good use of a range of visitors to enhance the experiences of pupils. For example, in an assembly for the upper school, a team of young people from a church group presented a powerful moral message based upon "what we put into ourselves affects what comes out of ourselves". Interesting practical demonstrations, song and video clips successfully capture children's interest and develop their awareness of right and wrong.

Pupils' cultural development is aided by activities including celebrating the Chinese New Year, trips to Spain to study Muslim culture through history, speakers from Malawi and Sierra Leone; and Christmas performances using Indian, African and Spanish dancing. Other cultures are studied in many parts of the formal curriculum.

Pupils have much to contribute; they are articulate and very good listeners. Pupils know what they like and dislike about their school, they say that some ideas such as the healthy tuck shop have been well received by the school because the headteacher is very approachable. Pupils appreciate the level of academic support given to them and view teaching in the school as good. Pupils do feel strongly however that they do not have regular avenues in which to air their views. They express frustration and a sense of injustice when sanctions are sometimes applied to whole groups of pupils by teachers, in response to an individual pupil's misdemeanours. This diminishes pupils' confidence and reduces their self esteem.

Pupils react positively to praise and awards, such as house points and merits which help to foster a sense of pride in their work. The school places a strong emphasis on celebrating pupils' efforts through performance and presentations in assemblies.

There are good opportunities for pupils to assume extra responsibilities through being a librarian, a monitor, in school performances and by undertaking extra duties. These are a sound preparation for roles in later life.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupil's welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has appropriate policies and procedures in place to minimise health and safety risks to pupils, including out-of-school visits. The buildings, including all classrooms, are checked frequently for any risks. The school has an appropriate First Aid policy and always has at least one qualified First Aider on site whilst the pupils are present.

The behaviour and anti-bullying policies are reinforced successfully through assemblies and religious studies. Personal, social and health education plays an important part in the school's provision for behaviour management. As a result, the

pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work are good, particularly in the Upper School. The pupils' health is considered carefully through the healthy eating tuck shop and the recent healthy eating week. Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns about their academic work. A number of pupils commented that staff did not always take full account of their concerns. The behaviour policy specifies the range of rewards for good work and effort and sanctions are detailed for unacceptable behaviour. It clearly states that parents will be informed whenever necessary. The school records any incidents of misbehaviour and logs carefully the procedures and outcomes to address matters.

The school meets fire safety regulations. It carries out and records termly fire drills. The fire officer has carried out a fire risk assessment.

The admission and attendance registers conform to regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has prepared a statement indicating how it can improve access to the physical environment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has appropriate procedures for checking the identity, medical fitness, qualifications and employment history of all staff. The school ensures that adults with regular contact with the pupils are checked through the Criminal Records Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school provides satisfactory teaching accommodation distributed over three floors. Most classrooms offer displays of pupils' work and posters which improve the learning environment, especially in the Reception and Lower School classrooms. There is no hall, but a spacious classroom is used for assemblies. It has a suitable library area which is used for independent study. The school has a number of arrangements to lessen the impact of not having indoor facilities for physical education (PE). Pupils in the Upper School travel each week to a local sports centre for a variety of fitness, gymnastics and sporting activities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have swimming lessons in the spring term. Pupils in the Lower School use the playground for PE activities. A laboratory provides a suitable specialist facility for practical science. The computer suite is placed centrally and is used regularly. The art room has insufficient space for more than ten pupils to work productively. The music room is sensibly placed so as not to disturb other lessons.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides parents with a range of useful information through its prospectus and additional information sheets given when a pupil starts school. Letters are sent periodically to update parents about forthcoming events and to reinforce some of the schools policies such as the encouragement of good behaviour. Recent supplementary sheets to the prospectus make clear to parents that further information about the school's procedures is available on request. Reports are sent to parents annually containing useful grade indications to pupils of GCSE entry, though comments about pupils' performance in the younger ages are linked to school tests which do not make clear comparisons to any national norms.

A significant number of parents indicate that there are inadequate arrangements for their views to be taken into account, though there is a recently established parent support group to which all parents are invited.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has a written complaints procedure. It meets the requirements in that it sets out clear timescales and procedures the school will follow in the management of a complaint. The school gives a copy of the policy to all prospective parents.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Handsworth Christian School
DfES Number:	373/6026
Type of school:	Christian day school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4-16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 70 Girls: 60 Total: 130
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 1 Girls: 3 Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils):	£2508
Address of school:	231 Handsworth Road Sheffield S13 9BJ
Telephone number:	0114 2430276
Fax number:	0114 2434016
Email address:	rmars@handsworthchristianschool.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs P. Arnott
Proprietor:	Company number 3809725. Chair Mr A. Marshall
Reporting Inspector:	John Coleman HMI
Date of inspection:	9-12 October 2006

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