



Bethany School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number 373/6027
Unique Reference Number 107168
Inspection number 296779
Inspection dates 13-14 March 2007
Reporting inspector Mr Ian Richardson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 4-16	Published 5 April 2007	Reference no. 296779
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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

Bethany School is a Christian family school. The school assists parents with their responsibilities to nurture their children according to their Christian faith. The governors believe that the Bible places prime responsibility upon parents for the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, spiritual and social development of their children. The idea of the school as an extension of each family has had a considerable effect upon the way in which Bethany School has developed. Thus the governors, staff and parents believe the school must never be so large that it loses the familiarity, informality and the caring discipline which should be features of family life; perhaps most importantly, parents should be involved in the education of their children alongside those who, because of training, may have greater experience. Teachers assist parents at Bethany, they do not replace them.

Evaluation of the school

Bethany School, in close collaboration with the parents, is providing a satisfactory education for pupils. Its ethos and guiding principles are Christian, and result in a caring environment where pupils are well looked after. In the view of pupils, teaching is of good quality, and inspectors also find this to be so. The school does not carry out assessments of pupils' progress against an agreed framework. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, and inspectors find that the provision for welfare, care and guidance is good. The school meets almost all the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and is based on nine themes from the book of Genesis. Planning is good and medium and short-term plans allow the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school makes a good attempt to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, but there are some areas which are not as strongly represented, such as music, geography and information and communication technology (ICT). These restrictions are related to a lack of staff expertise. While pupils use ICT in a range of lessons, the skills are not developed in line with a co-ordinated plan. However, pupils are able to take

lessons from visiting music teachers and steps have been taken to improve the provision for ICT.

Pupils from Reception to Year 3 are taught a good range of subjects, but for those in the Year 4, 5 and 6 class, geography is less well represented. Information and communication technology provision has been improved for these year groups by the introduction of specific lessons. In Years 7 and 8 pupils take 'World View Studies' which is planned to incorporate personal, social, health education (PSHE), citizenship and comparative religions. However, this course is in its infancy, and the planning for PSHE and citizenship is incomplete. In Key Stage 4 pupils experience a broad core of subjects: English, mathematics, science and a modern foreign language, and choose from history, art, design and technology, a second language and religious studies. The formally taught curriculum is supplemented by topic work, and also a half a day a week is devoted to a 'Family Afternoon', where parents assist and teach pupils through the use of various themes. This can include visits out of school, for example to a zoo, fire station or hospital, and the use of visiting speakers. This element is important in the life of the school in that it allows parents to be involved with the education of their children in a regular and practical way. Careers education and guidance are not formally timetabled but pupils receive advice from staff on their GCSE choices and career opportunities. Formal careers interviews are provided through the local Connexions service. Most transfer to tertiary education upon leaving the school.

Teaching is at least satisfactory and much is good. During discussions no pupil rated the teaching as less than good. They appreciate the way they are always able to approach a teacher for help, with confidence it would be given. While teaching is good overall the school has no formal policy on assessment, and hence, teaching and assessment together are judged as satisfactory. Teaching is well planned and adequately resourced. Relationships between staff and pupils are very cordial and pupils respond well to the teaching by working and behaving well. The better teaching is lively, provides an interesting range of activities for pupils, and is conducted at a good pace. The school does not use formal tests, apart from GCSE examinations, and there is no overall policy by which teachers assess pupils' work. This makes the tracking of pupils' performance and the progress they make more difficult. Evidence from lessons supports the view that pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. The school community is cohesive and caring. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and kindness to one another. Social development is good with pupils

mixing well regardless of ethnic heritage and age differences. Senior pupils particularly appreciate the mixed age classes and the family feel of the school.

There is a clear sense of pupils knowing right from wrong, and no poor behaviour or attitudes were seen during the inspection. Moral development is good and manifests itself in views expressed by pupils about doing the right thing and acting responsibly. Cultural awareness is promoted well in art, for example, looking at different cultures such as Indian and Australian Aboriginal. There are, however, few explicit references in resources, displays or work planned in other subjects.

Spiritual development is strong and is clearly at the heart of what the school does and the way it operates. This is evident in the prayer sessions at the start of the day, the participation of pupils, and the way in which work is often referenced to scripture. For example, wall displays give descriptions of creation, and other scriptural themes, such as Noah's Ark, related to work on living things and habitats. Overt references to spiritual matters were observed in some lessons.

Pupils' economic awareness is developed in a number of ways. In Year 10 pupils engage in work experience for one week and some extended this to two weeks by using their half term holiday. Pupils have careers interviews with Connexions staff in Year 11, and access to printed materials at other times. In Years 7, 8 and 9 all pupils are engaged in an enterprise project to develop their financial and economic awareness.

The care of pupils for each other is evident as is their appreciation of mixed age groupings. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning and other pupils. They are expected to behave and act responsibly. In Year 10 and 11 they have a rota of supervision duties during break time. In Year 10 a private study period is given over to doing service to the school in a range of ways such as office tasks. Throughout the school pupils' behaviour is outstanding and, on the whole, pupils are well motivated. Pupils show pleasure and enjoyment in the activities planned for them. Attendance rates for previous years are good. While the school maintains admission and attendance registers, it did not supply data on attendance and authorised or unauthorised absences in its self-evaluation or during the visit. There are good records from which these may be calculated.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. In discussion with pupils, and by their responses on questionnaires, it is clear that they feel safe and well cared for. All pupils asked thought that provision is good and half thought it outstanding. In two areas of the questionnaire pupils' views were less

positive, firstly that they are not receiving sufficient opportunity to take exercise, and secondly that the school is not helping them to make sensible decisions about what they eat and drink. Apart from these areas the pupils' view is strongly positive.

The school has ensured it has a suite of policies that are effective in underpinning the good provision. In these matters the school fully meets regulatory requirements. The school is planning to further improve access for those with physical disabilities in response to the requirements of the Disabilities Discrimination Act (DDA). The plan is detailed and thorough. Significant improvements are planned in the short term in anticipation of receiving a pupil with mobility difficulties. In addition, the plan goes beyond this to specify a three-year strategy.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All teaching staff, whether full or part time, have been recently checked with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Checks on two classroom assistants have been applied for, but confirmation has not yet been received. These staff are not left in sole charge of pupils. Procedures used for the recent appointment of staff comply with requirements for references, qualifications and health checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The school has been in the present buildings since 2001. It is housed in old school buildings that have been made fit for purpose. There has been effective prioritisation to raise the standards of accommodation, such that now all primary classrooms are bright, well decorated and well maintained. These areas have been further improved by relevant and engaging wall displays. The classroom areas used for the secondary aged pupils are less well decorated and more work is planned to improve the environment for learning. In less used areas of the school there is evidence of past penetration by weather and of the work done to improve the building's maintenance. For example, the treads of stairs have been improved and the edges made very visible to reduce the risk of accidents. There is a detailed plan to continue to bring about improvement. All children work in areas of appropriate size, have furniture that is fit for purpose, and that provide suitable areas for learning. Ventilation, lighting and heating of the teaching areas are adequate. There is a hard surface playground for pupils, and the school has access to a nearby grassed area for supervised recreational and sporting activities. There are no hand-washing facilities in the room provided for ill pupils as required by regulations.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information sent out to parents and prospective parents gives a very clear picture of the basis upon which this school operates. The principles of the school's partnership with parents in providing a Christian education are made explicit, as are the aims and purposes. The information pack contains much of the information that is needed to meet regulations. The school does not provide an annual written report for parents. At the time of inspection, the school had not made it clear that parents of pupils and prospective pupils may request information on academic performance in the preceding school year, details of the complaints procedures and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure, and the number of staff employed in the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications. The school is already taking steps to comply with these regulations.

Procedures for handling complaints

There is a policy for handling complaints which parents and prospective parents are informed they may request. However, the policy does not require that there is a record of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing. However, procedures carried out involve keeping such records.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish a programme of personal, social and health education (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- put a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- provide 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)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide hand washing facilities in the room designated for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)).
- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).
- ensure that parents are aware they can request the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).
- provide parents with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of each registered child in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- complete the planning for a balanced curriculum to include personal, social, health education, and citizenship
- construct an assessment framework that matches the school's ethos and allows teachers to track the progress made by pupils
- consider a range of ways to evaluate the quality of teaching
- seek to improve the opportunity that senior pupils have for exercise, and the help they receive to make sensible decisions over what they drink and eat.

School details

Name of school	Bethany School
DfES number	373/6027
Unique reference number	107168
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 1987
Age range of pupils	4 – 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 44 Girls: 31 Total: 75
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1523
Address of school	Finlay Street Sheffield South Yorkshire S3 7PS
Telephone number	0114272 6994
Fax number	0114 272 7003
Email address	bethanysch@aol.com
Headteacher	Mr Kenneth Walze
Proprietor	Mr Geoff Lawrence
Reporting inspector	Mr Ian Richardson HMI
Dates of inspection	13 - 14 March 2007