

Emmanuel School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	335/6009
Unique Reference Number	130323
Inspection number	301521
Inspection dates	3-4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Grounds 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).

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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

Emmanuel School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 16 years. It is located in Walsall in the West Midlands and at present occupies the same site as the Walsall Independent Evangelical Church. There are currently 60 pupils on roll with numbers set to grow. The school aims to support Christian parents who wish to send their children to a school where they can be educated in line with their beliefs and desires. Its mission statement is *'to bring glory to God by working with parents, along with the support of their local churches, to enable children to reach their God-given potential.'*

The school endeavours not to be isolationist. It welcomes children from families who subscribe to Christian beliefs across a wide range. It seeks to involve pupils in the wider community as they get older and its curriculum is broadly coincident with the National Curriculum and leads ultimately to the General Certificate of Secondary Education but also reflects its distinct Christian ethos.

The school aims to keep its fees low in order to make its education affordable to any children whose parents share its aims and beliefs.

Evaluation of the school

Emmanuel School is a good school. It provides a good quality of education and is successful in meeting its aims. All but one of the regulations are met. It provides good teaching and a satisfactory standard of care enabling pupils to develop academically and socially. It develops positive attitudes in pupils who make good progress. The curriculum enables pupils to develop good basic skills as well as knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad range of subjects. It enables its pupils to follow much of the National Curriculum but in a way which is modified and adapted to meet the school's strong Christian ethic. In this environment there is a very positive development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Very high quality social interactions are evident at all levels in the school. Parents, some of whom teach in the school, are overwhelmingly positive in their appreciation of it.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school provides a full time education, has an appropriate curriculum policy supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work and implements these effectively. Indeed, the use of schemes of work, often derived from published material or from government guidance or from other Christian schools, and the general level of planning for the success of pupils, are strengths of the provision and assist the quality of the teaching.

The curriculum throughout the school covers all of the required elements. For young children whilst generally appropriate to their needs, the balance between the six areas of Foundation Stage is overly weighted towards sedentary and indoor activities. In the main this is a consequence of the geography of the building and the lack of easy access to an outdoor area for children to exercise choice in overtly physical activities. Within Key Stages 1 to 3 the curriculum is generally well balanced. Pupils' exercise of the options scheme at Key Stage 4 has resulted in a curriculum with relatively small amounts of aesthetic, creative and technological aspects. The school has a small computer room with several machines linked to a network. All pupils above Key Stage 1 have a small time allocation for information and communication technology. The system is not yet connected to the internet which restricts its usefulness for research work by older pupils.

A strength of the academic curriculum is the strong contribution that some subjects make to pupils' personal development. In this way pupils are prepared well for leaving school. For example, Christian citizenship allows older pupils to address topics such as personal responsibility, coping with grief, parent-child relationships, attitudes to drugs, and Christian discipleship, to name but a few. Primary pupils have links with pen-pals in Peru and with pupils in the Indian sub-continent. Pupils visit other locations and other schools and take part in local competitions. The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision is enhanced by a good system of pastoral care and strong links with parents and the local community.

The programme for secondary aged pupils includes important elements of careers guidance inasmuch as pupils are given advice where to apply for post-16 study and the services of Connexions is deployed. Parents indicate that the transition beyond Key Stage 4 is good and that pupils are well-prepared for the change.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good across the school. Almost no teaching which was less than good in quality was seen. Relationships are good and teachers have very good control of their classes. Lessons are very well planned. In the secondary phase teachers have a good grasp of their subject and explain things clearly. A range of teaching strategies are adopted. Good use is made of recently purchased texts, CDs and other supplementary material. For example, in a French lesson the teacher played recordings of contemporary native speakers and in a geography lesson, pupils had to read and analyse a local authority officer's letter

about coastal erosion. Work is well matched to pupils and appropriately meets individual needs and abilities. The small class sizes enable teachers to assess informally in lessons where pupils are and to adjust and plan their teaching effectively. Pace is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and make good progress in them.

There are good systems to regularly assess pupils' work in a range of subjects and to use the evidence effectively to plan lessons. Pupils' books are regularly and impressively marked and comments are made to help them improve. Good levels of challenge result. Pupils who need it are supported effectively and where necessary pupils in the same class are given advanced and different work. Pupils record their weekly grades and marks on a form which is moderated by teachers in a weekly tutorial and passed to parents. Parents receive two full reports a year. As pupils progress through the school the information given includes descriptions of how well they are performing and marks to show the progress they are making. The use of standard tests ensures that the progress the pupils make is at least at national expectations. Generally pupils make greater progress than pupils do on average.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Spiritual awareness is promoted very effectively and is explicitly noted in teachers' planning. Pupils respond positively to this. Pupils make use of many excellent opportunities in lessons for reflection on ideas, experiences and moral issues. Behaviour is good and lessons are conducted in a happy and purposeful atmosphere. The prayer and reflective times at the start and end of lessons and during assemblies enable pupils to share and celebrate their achievements and experiences and to consider the needs of others.

The provision for pupils' moral development is supported effectively by the school's system of incentives and sanctions, which helps them to make appropriate choices and distinguish between right and wrong. Staff provide very good role models, both by example and by encouraging pupils to respect others and take care of themselves and the environment. As a consequence, pupils increase in self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence while they are at the school. Pupils are very aware of the rules and see the reasons for them.

Pupils' social development is promoted very successfully within the school day and through the variety of clubs and off-site activities, such as when pupils go on residential trips or visit other schools. Many of the classroom activities encourage pupils to work cooperatively in groups. For example, in a Year 5 music lesson, pupils worked effectively in groups to create a musical score for a silent film. Older pupils take part in a range of supporting activities in the school and local community, such as helping in younger classes whilst working for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Older pupils have been arguing the case for the adoption of a school council which will allow them, amongst other things, to extend their leadership skills. Pupils get on well and report that any minor disagreements are swiftly resolved.

Opportunities for pupils' cultural development are appropriately integrated within the subjects of the curriculum. Lessons in art, humanities and religious education, for example, provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the customs, beliefs and festivals of other cultures as well as their own. Topic work also gives pupils opportunities to learn about other countries, faiths and traditions. For example, pupils had been recently looking at life in Biblical times and the life, writing and culture of the Vikings. Older pupils' development of the aesthetic and creative, is more limited, as a consequence of their Year 10 choices of options.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school has made satisfactory arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. It is generally a safe place in which to work and learn. The school has implemented a comprehensive range of policies, which include those on child protection, the prevention of bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and behaviour. On a recent trip to London, risk assessments, for example, were carefully carried out. Pupils are well supervised at play and lunchtimes. The school encourages pupils to eat healthily and from time to time checks are made of pupils' lunch boxes. Pupils know whom to turn to if they have any concerns or problems and feel very secure in the school. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school takes great care to ensure that all staff employed by the school are suitable for the work that is expected of them. All staff have either a Criminal Records Bureau check or else, under older regulations and in the case of any previously living overseas, an appropriate check in their country of origin. However, the school has not kept formal records of interviews, checked qualifications nor explicitly asked referees whether there is any reason why applicants should not work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is currently accommodated in a former Territorial Army building in the centre of Walsall. This accommodation is adequate for the current number on roll. The rooms are pleasantly furnished. The school uses several rooms in the church including a large hall which is used for physical education, a smaller room used for assemblies and a kitchen used for food and nutrition. Beyond the main building the school has an outside covered area and a small science laboratory. There is a suitable playground which at certain times doubles up as a car park but which is fenced off when used as a play area.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides the parents with all the necessary information. Throughout the year it employs a large number of strategies to ensure that there is good communication with them. Among these is an annual "envisioning day" in which the school vision is shared with parents and there is extended discussion.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meet the regulations.

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 that listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that there are checks of applicants' qualifications, ensure interviews are documented and that requests for references explicitly ask whether there is any reason why the applicant should not work with children (paragraph 4(c)).

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:

- improve the level of challenge for younger pupils in its physical education requirements
- increase the curriculum opportunities for older pupils to achieve in aesthetic, creative and technological aspects.

School details

Name of school	Emmanuel School		
DfES number	335/6009		
Unique reference number	130323		
Type of school	Faith: Christian		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 30	Total: 56
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 2	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	Primary from £1656; Secondary from £1980		
Annual fees (boarders)	n/a		
Address of school	Bath Street Centre Walsall West Midlands WS1 3DB		
Telephone number	01922635810		
Fax number	n/a		
Email address	office@emmanuel.walsall.sch.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Swain		
Proprietor	Walsall Independent Evangelical Church		
Reporting inspector	Stephen Grounds HMI		
Dates of inspection	3-4 July 2007		