

Christian Fellowship School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	341/6040
Unique Reference Number	104730
Inspection number	316830
Inspection dates	28-29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Coleman 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Christian Fellowship School opened in 1981 and moved to its present site in Edge Hill, Liverpool about 10 years ago. The number of pupils on roll has steadily increased to the current figure of around 200. Whilst the school serves the 4-16 age range it is organised into distinct lower (4-8 years of age), middle (8-13) and upper schools (13-16). The school aims to provide for parents who want an education with a 'Christian Worldview' and is non selective. The school is part of the Christian Schools Trust, which provides professional training and links with about 40 similar schools. The pupils come from a very wide area in Merseyside and represent the communities of more than 50 churches. The founding churches are represented on the governing body. About 20% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is about 10%. The school was last inspected in November 2002. The long-serving headteacher provides an advisory role to the executive headteacher who took up post in September 2007 after many years as manager of the curriculum.

The school's vision is to: *'equip young people to make informed Christ-centred choices and commitments; encouraging them to make a positive difference to society and the environment rather than be primarily self-serving. To achieve this, the school develops the ability of students to respond creatively to challenge and change, and sensitively to diverse perspectives'*.

Evaluation of the school

Christian Fellowship School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Outstanding features include the level of care which is provided, the behaviour of pupils and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils achieve well and make good progress because the quality of teaching is consistently good and a good curriculum is in place. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Almost all the independent school regulations are met.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good in the lower, middle and upper schools. It provides a balanced range of experiences with a strong emphasis on pupils' personal, moral and spiritual development. In lower school pupils' personal, social and communication skills are given clear priority. In middle school pupils are encouraged to develop as independent learners. In upper school there is a focused approach to develop pupils' analytical and evaluative skills.

The National Curriculum is used as part of the curriculum structure throughout the school. Provision in science is particularly personalised to reflect the school's Christian ethos. For example, in the Reception class pupils are taught about the creation story and the uniqueness of the earth. There is significant time given to exploring the huge variety of plants, animals, humans, ecosystems and materials. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are utilised effectively and selectively in the lower and middle schools. The development of pupils' reading skills is aided by good resources and a wide range of books, together with the regular teaching of phonics. In the middle school, selected novels form the theme for a half term's work around which many activities are organised. These help pupils to make sense of their learning by understanding links and connections in knowledge and understanding. A commercial scheme for mathematics is in place and the school is exploring ways of making best use of this. Currently there is some variation in its use between classes. There is close staff liaison between the three parts of the school which ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Subject specialist teaching is provided in upper school and in history and geography from Year 6, in music from Year 4, and in swimming from the Reception class onwards. The curriculum has appropriate options for pupils through Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils may access courses leading to the acquisition of life skills, Entry Level qualifications and GCSE awards. There are no vocational options available to pupils as yet. Pupils are offered work experience programmes in Year 10. Connexions advisors are utilised to provide careers guidance and preparation for the next stage in education or employment. There is a good programme for personal, social and moral development. Provision for pupils with LDD benefits from the good contribution of the special educational needs co-ordinator. Pupils with statements of special educational needs and those with LDD have individual education plans. There are a few extra-curricular opportunities for pupils and they enjoy these, for example chess, football and vocals.

The quality of teaching is good. There is a range of quality from satisfactory to outstanding with the overwhelming majority of lessons being good. This is a consistent picture across the full age range. Relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding. They are built on mutual trust and respect. Teachers expect very high standards of behaviour and they are rewarded by pupils who show excellent responses to learning. Pupils want to come to school; they told inspectors that they

enjoy lessons because 'teachers are fun'. Teachers know their pupils well and take an interest in their progress. This is much appreciated by pupils and demonstrates the atmosphere of 'family' which pervades the school. Teachers are successful in getting pupils increasingly to think for themselves and a strong emphasis is placed upon pupils developing self-reflecting attitudes. Resources in classrooms are good overall. Teachers make good use of the format for medium-term curriculum planning which has been developed over time by the headteacher and senior staff. Short-term planning is variable however; much is a diary of broad content for lessons which does not always identify specific learning objectives. There is a lack of consistency when teachers plan and insufficient account is sometimes taken of pupils' prior attainment. Consequently in some lessons pupils of differing abilities do largely the same tasks and the level of challenge is not well matched to the needs of some groups of pupils. The quality of assessment is satisfactory and there are effective systems for testing pupils' learning through standardised scores and teacher-designed tests. Assessment in lessons is less well developed and although some teachers are very adept in their ongoing evaluations of the progress pupils make, this is not consistent in all classes.

Most pupils enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge which are about the same as those found in most schools. The intake into the Reception class represents about half the total intake of the school. Significant numbers may join at the start of Year 7 and other years also experience new starters. The school's assessment data shows that for each of these intake groups there is considerable variation in attainment levels from one cohort of pupils to another, but taken over time there is a full range of ability represented in approximately average proportions. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 they reach standards which are above average and this represents good achievement. The school uses standardised testing extensively and this helps to identify pupils who may need extra support. As a result of good support, pupils with LDD make good progress. The school does not yet analyse the performance of cohorts or groups of pupils as they move through the school in order to track their progress. Consequently the school governors, proprietors and senior staff are insufficiently aware of how good pupil progress is from year to year and whether any group of pupils under-perform expectations. The school does not set targets for future performance based upon what is known about pupils' current attainments.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The daily routines of school enable pupils to develop self-confidence and a maturing sense of responsibility. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding because of the very good role models provided by staff who set high expectations combined with tolerance, respect and understanding. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect upon their experiences and to explore this process with their peers through discussion. Pupils enjoy school; they are confident in their relationships and feel they are listened to. Pupils reflect critically upon moral and ethical issues, they

articulate their faith confidently and appreciate other faiths and cultures. Pupils benefit from the intrinsic inclusion of spiritual development throughout the school curriculum; it interweaves every dimension of pupils' learning experiences.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. The pupils are very well supervised in their day-to-day activities. Staff are vigilant and caring. Relationships are excellent and pupils say they feel safe and have confidence that they are looked after well. Risk assessments are completed appropriately. Policies for child protection, health and safety, and first aid are in place. Named staff have designated responsibilities for first aid and child protection and have training which is up to date. Registers are kept appropriately and attendance is above average.

Some pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire thought that there were insufficient opportunities for them to take regular exercise. Inspectors disagree; the school provides more than two hours of physical education each week including swimming from the Reception class upwards. There are only a limited number of extra-curricular activities available, most of which are at lunchtime, but this provision is hindered by the vast majority of pupils having to travel considerable distances to and from the school.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff and governors are subject to the required safeguarding checks including those by the Criminal Records Bureau. Records are kept in a single central register but checks made on the proprietors are not all included in the register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a former local authority secondary school building. On four floors, the classrooms are of good size and facilities include science laboratories, art rooms, a computer suite, a technology room and an assembly hall/gym which offers a sizable stage. The standard of maintenance and decoration is satisfactory. Outside there is a good size hard-surfaced play area and considerable grassed sections.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a suitable range of information to parents, carers and others. A good school web site contains a large variety of information including the prospectus and details of the school's curriculum and philosophy. Although contact details are available for the school, there is no address or telephone number for either the chair of governors or the proprietors. The school produces annual accounts for the funds received from local authorities in respect of pupils with statements of special education needs, but these are not sent to the authorities.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures fully 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 those listed below.

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

- in relation to each of the proprietors ensure that the register shows that the relevant safeguarding checks have been carried out (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

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

- provide particulars of contact addresses and telephone numbers for the proprietors and chair of governors (paragraphs 6(2)(b) and 6(2)(c))
- ensure that an annual statement of account is submitted to any local authority which provides funding for a pupil with a statement of special educational needs (paragraph 6(7)).

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:

- implement a rigorous system to track pupils' academic progress
- ensure that objectives for pupils' learning provide differentiated challenges to match pupils' capabilities.

School details

Name of school	Christian Fellowship School		
DCSF number	341/6040		
Unique reference number	104730		
Type of school	Christian		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1981		
Age range of pupils	4-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 99	Girls: 95	Total: 194
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3	Girls: 1	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 4	Total: 5
Annual fees	£2520		
Address of school	Overbury Street Edge Hill Liverpool Merseyside L7 3HL		
Telephone number	0151 709 1642		
Fax number	0151 709 6164		
Email address	info@cfschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Barbara Lord		
Proprietor	Mr Dennis Collins		
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI		
Dates of inspection	28-29 November 2007		