

Greater Grace School of Christian Education

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	8756027
Unique Reference Number	131791
Inspection number	316837
Inspection dates	21-22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon 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

The Greater Grace School of Christian Education is situated in a small village near Chester. The school is registered to admit pupils from age five to eighteen. There are currently 11 pupils on roll, aged eight to seventeen. As a condition for admission, at least one of the parents of a pupil must be a Christian.

The school follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age *Learning Centres*, one for juniors and one for seniors. In these classes pupils work individually and silently on graded workbooks for at least half of the school day. They are responsible for the marking of their own work, under the guidance of a supervisor teacher. The school opened in 1998 and was approved for registration as an independent school in 2002. This is the first full inspection of education.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education at the Greater Grace School of Christian Education is satisfactory, with a number of good features: the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the provision for their health, safety and welfare. The school is particularly successful in its aim of providing a Christian education; in this it is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. The school meets all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. The ACE curriculum makes good provision for the development of basic skills in English and mathematics. In the morning sessions pupils follow the individual packages of work set out in booklets called Packages of Accelerated Christian Education (PACEs), covering six core aspects of curriculum: English, science, mathematics, word-building, social sciences, creative writing and literature. These allow individuals to work at their own pace and to make good progress.

In the afternoon sessions, taught by teachers or instructors, there are further subjects and '*electives*'. These comprise further core subjects such as information and communications technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and practical science. Further time is allocated to individual choices, for

example further PACEs to reinforce a weaker subject. Provision for ICT and for French is good. These afternoon subjects also offer opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, through discussions and individual pupil presentations. Overall, this balance between individual silent study and class activities ensures that the minimum requirements for the curriculum are met.

There is limited provision for the development of creative skills, mainly through art, and through creative writing in English and in presentations. For example, older pupils choose a topic for research related to their Bible study and, in this way, are able to offer a personal response. They use ICT well to present their findings, orally and in writing. There is little music or drama apart from preparation for religious festivals and the ACE schools' annual European Convention. Provision for science is satisfactory. The PACEs cover theory in science up to Key Stage 4. Some simple, practical science experiments are conducted.

The PSHE programme '*Successful living*' goes some way to preparing pupils for their future and for learning how to keep themselves safe. It introduces facts about risk-taking behaviour, such as smoking, illicit drugs and crime. Although the PSHE programme is satisfactory, the school acknowledges that it does not show how effectively, over time, all the content will be covered.

Pupils do not sit GCSEs or other public examinations. Through the PACEs they gain credits towards The International Certificate of Christian Education. The school is actively exploring routes for progression on to further and higher education. There is evidence that this leaving certificate is increasingly considered suitable for entry. One recent school leaver is now following a higher education degree course. Pupils consider career choices through the PACEs and have recently attended a careers fair. However, opportunities for work-related learning are very limited. Through their questionnaires and interviews pupils say that they would like more opportunities to have their views considered and a broader choice in curriculum opportunities.

Overall, teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and some is good. There are two *Learning Centres*, each with a teacher-supervisor to guide pupils. Additionally, there are two specialist teachers part-time, one for mathematics and ICT and one for science. The headteacher teaches French, and specialist coaches help with sports off-site. These teachers deliver good quality class-taught lessons, which challenge the pupils to think and respond.

Resources are adequate overall and they are good for the ACE curriculum. Teachers draw on additional resources beyond the ACE materials, such as published schemes, adapted to suit the school's needs. Resources for practical science are adequate, having been recently improved.

The teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan the group lessons well, to cater for the age and ability spread in their classes. They check that the PACEs programmes are sufficiently challenging for each pupil. Small class sizes allow the teachers to help individual pupils and relationships are good. Teachers encourage

pupils to try their best and they support the pupils well. The faith, knowledge and enthusiasm of the staff guide pupils well in their knowledge of Scripture. The content of the various subjects is underpinned by examples from Scripture, so lessons are cohesive and reinforce the Christian teaching.

Pupils work diligently and the school's records show that they make good progress. This is related partly to the quality of teaching that they receive, but mainly to the efforts of the pupils themselves, over time, to master basic skills through completing the PACEs. Pupils develop good skills in working independently through the PACEs. They make good progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, from their various starting points. The PACEs allow pupils to proceed at a rate which suits each individual. Extension work, such as in-depth reading or writing is given to more able pupils, where appropriate. Listening and speaking skills develop satisfactorily through afternoon lessons and through preparation work for the European Convention and for individual presentations.

Pupils are rather passive learners in some lessons. They have too few opportunities to express a personal viewpoint or to make extended oral responses. There are some missed opportunities to link pupils' everyday lives or events in the world around them to teaching points and so make the lessons seem relevant. At times, teachers talk too much and answer their own questions, before finding out first what pupils think or could contribute. In the best lessons, pupils interact with the teacher, discuss their learning and feel able to offer suggestions. Pupils themselves say that they enjoy the 'hands-on' lessons, such as art, design and technology and ICT and visits off-site, and would welcome more of these.

Assessment is good. Pupils are assessed on entry and subsequently, their progress is linked to standardised assessments. This provides some idea of how they are doing compared to the progress pupils would normally be expected to make by a particular age. This is helpful when pupils choose their *electives* or when they leave school. The PACEs provide regular, day to day detailed feedback on how pupils are progressing in their learning. Pupils set themselves appropriate personal daily targets for work they will complete. Teachers monitor these, to ensure that pupils are suitably challenged. There are frequent, formal tests of progress and detailed termly reports for parents.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is outstanding and this is highly valued by parents and pupils alike. Attendance is excellent. Religious education is a significant strength. The ACE curriculum fosters and develops an in-depth knowledge and understanding of Christianity. The cohesive curriculum of daily devotions, Bible study and lessons all develop pupils' faith and understanding of Biblical teaching. As a result, pupils have very sound moral grounding and a very clear sense of right and wrong. This dimension to the curriculum is evident across all subjects, where the Christian standpoint and teaching influences the content and tasks that pupils are

set. This curriculum reinforces the aims of the school, impacting directly on the pupils' good moral and social development, and on their welfare. The teachers provide very good role models for the pupils.

The provision for pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory. Their basic skills develop well. Pupils have some contacts with the local community, for example, at harvest festival and they get involved in fundraising for charity. In this way pupils learn how to make a positive contribution to their local and wider communities. Pupils learn about other religions and cultures through their PACEs and through PSHE and citizenship lessons, in a way which promotes tolerance and understanding. A programme for education about citizenship is in place but is not yet fully developed. Through this, and the PSHE programme, there are opportunities yet to be grasped for further developing the pupils' skills in expressing their views and opinions. Pupils say that they would welcome further information to help prepare them for the choices they must make and the issues they will face as they mature, and when they leave school.

Pupils are very self-disciplined and motivated. Their behaviour is outstanding, encouraged by an effective system of positive rewards for effort. Relationships amongst pupils are friendly, helpful and caring. On a one-to-one basis pupils are quite confident, though they are a little reticent with strangers and in expressing their views.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good. All the required policies to help safeguard pupils are in place, and up to date. Detailed records are kept. Pupils are well cared for and say that they enjoy school. Parents' responses show that they are satisfied with the care their children receive. The school makes good provision for keeping pupils safe. Detailed records and procedures are followed for every aspect of school life.

There is adequate provision to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. For example, the school organises opportunities for athletics, together with swimming and tennis taught by specialist coaches, in the local area. The younger pupils also have lessons in skills development for ball games.

The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the required checks on staff employed at the school, including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau, have been satisfactorily completed. The school complies with the most recent guidance on this.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises are satisfactory. The accommodation provides a good environment for learning. There are three classrooms. A fourth classroom serves as the school church. Together these provide sufficient space. The premises are purpose-built as a school and are kept clean and tidy. There is a small playground with both grass and hard surfaces. There are no specialist rooms, but there is some basic science equipment and the kitchen area is used for some practical lessons. Two classrooms have ICT equipment.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information provided for parents is good. They receive all the information which the regulations require. A prospectus contains most of this, and further information is available on request from the school. Parents receive helpful, termly written reports detailing the progress that their children have made.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all requirements. The school is small and so it is easy for parents to raise any concerns informally.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- further develop pupils' oral skills, for example in expressing opinions and in giving extended responses
- look for ways in which pupils' views and suggestions about decisions which affect them may be considered
- pull together the various strands of the PSHE and citizenship programmes to gain a better overview, so that pupils are well-prepared for when they leave school
- identify opportunities to promote further the creative and aesthetic aspects of the curriculum, and work-related learning

School details

Name of school	Greater Grace School of Christian Education		
DCSF number	8756027		
Unique reference number	131791		
Type of school	Christian		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1998		
Age range of pupils	5-18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 8	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1560		
Address of school	Church Lane Backford Chester Cheshire CH2 4BE		
Telephone number	01244851797		
Email address	GGS@paraklete.com		
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Mulligan		
Proprietor	Greater Grace Christian School Trust		
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI		
Dates of inspection	20–21 November 2007		