

Plantings School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	879/6008
Unique Reference Number	133949
Inspection number	316947
Inspection dates	28-29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath 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

Plantings School is a small Christian school for pupils aged between 3 and 17 years. It is located in a suburb of Plymouth and occupies an extended former residential house. Currently fourteen pupils attend, ten of whom are boys. Additionally, two children have part-time places in the nursery. The school is an integral part of the Peverell Community Church and it is governed and owned by a registered charity administered by the Church. The school seeks to provide a family atmosphere which is '*calm, secure and stimulating*'. Pupils '*are encouraged to grow in regard for God, each other, adults, themselves and property*'. This is the first full inspection since the school opened in 1983.

Evaluation of the school

Plantings School provides a satisfactory quality of education. The school's strong moral code underpins the positive relationships between staff and pupils. The good quality of care and respectful ethos are successful in promoting pupils' good personal development. The quality of the curriculum and teaching is satisfactory, which leads to pupils making satisfactory progress. Curriculum planning is incomplete for some subjects and limited use is made of assessment information to plan lessons. The school has a good understanding of its priorities for further development and meets most of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a broad range of experiences which includes all the required areas of learning. In accordance with the school's aims there is an emphasis on pupils developing an understanding of the principles of Christianity which is supported by daily Bible reading classes. The school provides an adequate range of activities in science, design and technology (DT) and art, although opportunities for studying the practical aspects of these subjects are limited by the school's lack of facilities. Provision for physical education (PE) is made through use of the school's small hall and by visits to a local leisure centre. The curriculum for the Nursery and Reception class provides a satisfactory variety of activities.

Most classes contain pupils from more than one year group which presents a challenge for planning the curriculum. A clear policy sets out how a combination of half-termly topics and discrete subjects is provided. Schemes of work are in place for many but not all subjects. In some subjects planning does not demonstrate clearly how pupils will acquire new knowledge and develop their skills as they progress up the school. Although many aspects of personal, social and health education are covered in subjects across the curriculum, these experiences are not drawn together into a satisfactory programme. The school recognises that aspects of curriculum planning need further development and it is currently working on them. National Extension College (NEC) correspondence courses offer a satisfactory range of GCSE and A level subjects for older pupils. These pupils are few in number and there is little opportunity provided for them to work collaboratively with peers of similar age.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. A calm and purposeful atmosphere prevails in lessons and a good variety of activities maintains pupils' interest in learning. Teachers use questioning well to draw out pupils' views although there are few opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking and listening skills by discussing their ideas with each other. Classroom routines are well established and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their work and equipment. This fosters their independence. Homework is set regularly and pupils are encouraged to keep diaries and scrap books of holiday and weekend activities. Teachers generally have a satisfactory knowledge of the subjects they teach and older pupils receive additional academic support from external tutors associated with the NEC courses. Resources to support teaching and learning are adequate and staff are creative in designing their own materials, especially in helping to teach practical lessons. The school has a suitable range of texts for most subjects and these are supplemented by use of the Devon Schools Library Service. Pupils have access to computers and appropriate equipment supports the teaching of games and PE.

The gathering of assessment information and its use to plan lessons is underdeveloped. Consequently, activities are not always closely matched to each pupil's ability. This sometimes leads to higher achieving pupils not being sufficiently challenged and others being unclear about what they are expected to learn. The school does not have in place a framework for evaluating pupils' performance and referencing it to the performance of pupils nationally or to its own aims. The school is currently reviewing its use of assessment information.

Pupils make satisfactory progress and in recent years the small numbers of leavers have gained a range of GCSE passes. One has stayed at the school to study A level subjects, whilst others have taken up courses at the local college of further education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to reflect and to develop spiritual awareness during prayers and in assemblies. The school

charter 'A Safe Place to Be' emphasises the rules of respect for each other and for personal belongings. Pupils learn to consider moral issues and the consequences of behaviour on others during religious education (RE) lessons and in Bible reading. Staff provide very good role models and treat pupils with respect. This develops pupils' understanding of right and wrong and promotes their good behaviour.

Pupils enjoy their education and get along well with each other. They like being in a small school where they say 'people are friendly' and they feel they benefit from individual help with their work. Their efforts and achievements are recognised when they receive 'smiley faces', earn small rewards or are awarded the 'student of the month' trophy. Pupils routinely contribute towards the running of the school, for example when they clear away after drinks or organise equipment, and when older pupils help younger children in the nursery.

Pupils learn about different religions and cultures in the RE curriculum and when they study topics in geography. They develop an understanding of world issues, for example when they raise money for a charity supporting children in Africa, or sponsor a child in Bethlehem. Pupils' understanding of public institutions and services is promoted through topics in history and when they make trips into the local community, for example to the lifeboat service, naval dockyard and environmental management projects. The impact of some of this work is limited because it is not set out in a comprehensive programme. Pupils leave school having developed a strong work ethic and gained a range of GCSE passes, which helps to prepare them effectively for future employment.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school provides a caring environment where pupils feel safe. Policies are in place to tackle any bullying and to promote good behaviour. There are good levels of staffing. Pupils report they are generally able to discuss any concerns with adults, although some note that it is difficult to speak to adults in complete confidence in a small school community where there are such close relationships. Pupils develop an understanding of healthy food in science lessons and topics on food. Pupils take part in weekly physical exercise in the school and visit a leisure centre for swimming.

Relevant health and safety policies and risk assessments are in place. Fire drills are held regularly and fire safety equipment checked. Two members of staff are trained in first aid and an appropriate first aid policy is in place. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. There is a clear policy in place which is understood by staff. However, the member of staff responsible for child protection has not had recent training as required. The school does not have a plan to show how the accommodation will be modified in future to meet the needs of disabled users.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau to ensure they are suitable to work with children. References and confirmation of employment history are sought for all new appointments. However, the school does not keep a central record which includes this information or evidence of checks on an applicant's proof of identity, medical fitness and the validity of their qualifications. The proprietor does not keep a record of similar information as required, for staff and members of the proprietorial body.

School's premises and accommodation

The standard of the premises and accommodation is satisfactory. There are three general classrooms, a small hall, a room for individual study and a multi-purpose room currently used for storage. Classrooms are of suitable size for the number of pupils using them. There are no specialist rooms for teaching science, art and DT and current arrangements limit the range of topics which can be covered in these subjects. Although there is a sufficient number of toilets they are not organised to ensure that boys, girls and staff have the use of separate facilities. Adequate space for outside play is provided at the rear of the property. This includes some climbing equipment for younger children.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school prospectus contains a range of information about its aims and organisation. However, the school does not provide for parents, carers and others all the required information about the school and is currently updating its prospectus to contain this information. Parents meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress at the end of each term. In keeping with the school's policy, this information is not presented in a written form to show pupils' progress in each subject taught. In response to the questionnaires sent out prior to the inspection, parents express overwhelmingly positive views about the school and report that they feel well informed about their children's progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy which has recently been revised to meet the regulations. The policy sets out how informal and formal complaints may be made to the school and parents can receive a copy on request.

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:

- support the curriculum policy with appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2))
- provide personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference either to 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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure the designated person receives up-to-date training in child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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 (including volunteers), ensure appropriate checks are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom and where appropriate, qualifications (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure the chairperson checks the other members of the proprietorial body to confirm their identity and right to work in the UK (paragraph 4B(4) and (5))
- keep a register of all staff which shows details of checks made against the requirements of the regulations, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))
- keep a register of all persons named as the proprietor which shows details of checks made against the requirements of the regulations, including the date on which each check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6 and 7))
- ensure the register in which the information is recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form (paragraph 4C(9)).

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

- ensure the allocation of toilets for staff and pupils takes account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

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

- provide the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a))
- provide particulars of the address and telephone number of the proprietor (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- ensure that parents are aware they can request:
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
 - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
 - the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Plantings School		
DCSF number	879/6008		
Unique reference number	133949		
Type of school	Christian all-age		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	3-17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 4	Total: 14
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£960 - £1,200		
Address of school	33 Old Park Road Peverell Plymouth PL3 4PY		
Telephone number	01752 265171		
Email address	planting.school@rmplc.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Denise Webber		
Proprietor	Peverell Community Church		
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection	28-29 November 2007		