

# Thames Christian College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	212/6403
Unique Reference Number	132237
Inspection number	316961
Inspection dates	12-13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI

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

Thames Christian College is a non-denominational Christian secondary school located in recently refurbished premises in Battersea, in south London. It was opened in 2000 by the present proprietors, Thames Christian College Ltd. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities, including some pupils placed at the school by local authorities. The school admits boys and girls aged eleven to sixteen and there are currently 78 pupils on roll. Some pupils have learning disabilities and difficulties, including specific and moderate learning difficulties. A small number have physical disabilities and emotional and social difficulties. A few pupils do not speak English as their mother tongue. The school was last inspected in June 2002 and there have been significant changes in leadership and staffing since then. At the time of the inspection, four teachers in their induction year had only just started at the school.

The school states that *'Thames has at its foundation a caring Christian ethos... the message we want to give ... is "We care about you."* The school's slogan for the coming year is *'Strive for Perfection – Deliver Excellence'*.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided at Thames Christian College is good. There is an interesting and varied curriculum of good quality and good teaching, which engage pupils' interests effectively. As a result, pupils are making good progress in most subjects. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good. Parents and pupils are positive about the school, which has a clear Christian ethos and provides a good quality of care. It meets all of the regulations. The school has made a good level of improvement since its last inspection, despite the fact there has been a period of disruption due to staff and management changes.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is good. A wide range of activities is provided for pupils, although coverage of aspects of design and technology is not as good as other areas of the curriculum. There is an appropriate range of visits and extra-curricular activities provided. Pupils say they particularly enjoy the sporting activities offered. Schemes

of work for GCSE subjects cover the syllabi well. Work is well matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is good provision for pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue. In Key Stage 3, lessons provide good coverage of most National Curriculum subjects and religious education. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including appropriate sex education and information about substance abuse. Pupils are well prepared for their future life.

Teaching is good overall. During the inspection, in a significant number of lessons teaching was judged to be outstanding. Planning is good overall and most teachers have high expectations of their pupils. In the best lessons teaching is brisk and enthusiastic, leading to very good progress and excellent behaviour. However, in a few lessons, work is not sufficiently closely matched to the needs of individual pupils and expectations are not high enough. In most lessons, teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and make appropriate use of information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources. Outstanding practice in professional development ensures that teachers have good subject knowledge and are fully acquainted with current educational initiatives. Classroom teaching is monitored effectively, supported by a policy of mutual lesson observation and training. Staff know their pupils well and pupils readily ask for help. Pupils enjoy their lessons, show interest and curiosity and engage in the activities presented to them with enthusiasm.

Assessment is good throughout the school. Teachers set and mark work regularly and assessment is used to plan lessons and to set and review individual targets. Pupils generally understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve. This is evident in the improving results in national examinations.

Pupils make good progress overall. Progress is outstanding in a number of subjects, including English, biology, chemistry and art,. Pupils make good progress in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They currently make satisfactory progress in mathematics, history and sports science, although there is some evidence that progress is improving as a result of recent changes in staffing and raised expectations. Pupils with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress towards their learning targets, as do pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and both they and their parents spoke positively about the education they receive. Although in a predominantly Christian environment, pupils have numerous opportunities to investigate other faiths and beliefs through the religious education programme. They treat each other with respect and have a good appreciation of their own and other cultures. Self-knowledge and self-confidence are

promoted successfully through rewards and the opportunities for leadership, although these are mainly confined to the older pupils.

Pupils attend regularly and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, with mutual respect evident between pupils and teachers. Teachers lead by example. Morality is part of the ethos of the school with pupils learning the difference between right and wrong from the moment they enter the school. They develop a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in the United Kingdom through the varied visits both abroad and in the community. The close link the school has with a local independent Christian primary school and the efforts the pupils make to raise money for charity, help to extend their appreciation of society and culture, and to make positive contributions themselves. The school provides good guidance and training for pupils' future economic well-being and pupils feel well prepared for the next phase of their life.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare and well-being is good and is given a high priority. This contributes effectively to pupils' good personal development. All pupils are encouraged to follow active and healthy lifestyles. They have regular access to fresh drinking water. The school is planning to provide healthy meals this term, but pupils say they have not received sufficient information about healthy eating. Pupils understand and respect the behaviour code and this contributes to their safety in and around the premises. Arrangements to ensure child protection are very good and fully meet the latest requirements. Policies are reviewed regularly and accurate records are kept carefully. Risk assessments and fire safety are managed very well. First aid provision is good and there are first aiders on duty at all times. Records of accidents are comprehensive and up-to-date. The school fully meets all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has a detailed three-year plan for increasing access to the school's provision.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has good procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff and has employed appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and assistants. The school ensures that appointments are confirmed only after thorough checks are conducted. Appropriate checks are also made on the medical fitness of staff prior to their appointment.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises are fit for purpose, safe, well maintained and attractively decorated. The prominent display of pupils' high quality art work adds appreciably to the appearance of the school, which is currently being enlarged to contain a new graphics and ceramics area. Specialist facilities are good and the art room is spacious and well equipped, as is the science laboratory. Other classrooms are adequate in size, suitably furnished and equipped and maintained in a clean and tidy manner.

There is no outdoor play area, but the school makes good use of the local park and there is a sports centre close by. Facilities for pupils who are ill are good. There are sufficient resources for all subjects, including a generous number of computers for pupils' use.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has good communication procedures with regular, professionally produced newsletters and detailed end-of-year reports sent to all parents to keep them informed of their children's progress. Parents are alerted quickly if the school has any concerns and parents are welcomed into school to meet with staff whenever the need arises. Close links with home to support pupils in their learning and development is a feature of the school. The school has an attractive prospectus and website which convey a very good range of relevant and valuable information.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has good procedures for receiving and handling complaints.

## 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:

- provide additional training for staff to ensure that work is consistently matched to the needs of individual pupils
- provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills in design and technology.

## School details

Name of school	Thames Christian College		
DCSF number	212/6403		
Unique reference number	132237		
Type of school	Secondary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2000		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 49	Girls: 29	Total: 78
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 4	Girls: 0	Total: 4
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,550		
Address of school	Wye Street London SW11 2HB		
Telephone number	0207 228 3933		
Fax number	0208 404 2633		
Email address	info@thameschristiancollege.org.uk		
Headteacher	Dr S Holsgrove		
Proprietor	Thames Christian College Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett AI		
Dates of inspection	12-13 September 2007		