

Maranatha Christian School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	866/6001
Unique Reference Number	126536
Inspection number	318151
Inspection dates	17-18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew 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 (DCSF) about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Maranatha Christian School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between two and 19 years of age. It is situated in a rural setting close to Swindon in Wiltshire. Admission is non-selective. One pupil has a statement of special educational need. At the time of the inspection there were 65 pupils on roll. The school teaches the curriculum of Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) which is an individualised learning programme. The school was registered in 1999. Its aim is to provide "an education based on Biblical foundations and Christian principles".

Evaluation of the school

This is a good school which achieves its stated aim. The distinctive Christian ethos pervades all aspects of the school's life, helping pupils to feel recognised as children of God, secure and valued. The good quality curriculum is flexible enough to meet the different needs of pupils. Consistently good teaching results in pupils making good progress and becoming effective learners who are highly motivated and apply themselves well to the tasks they are given. Assessment is very well established. The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are well cared for and procedures to ensure welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are happy to be in the school and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, pleased with the education their children receive and believe they make good progress. The school meets almost all of the regulations.

Quality of education

The good curriculum provides a framework within which pupils learn effectively and make good progress. The school uses the materials and methodology of the ACE curriculum. This provides an individualised learning programme well suited to the school's guiding Christian principles and its wide age range.

The ACE curriculum plan is based on a 12 year model and is designed to give broad, progressive and differentiated provision. It is thoroughly supported by manuals of practice which help supervisors and monitors¹ to ensure consistent approaches and

¹ Supervisor is the title given to teachers; monitor is the title given to assistants.

expectations across the school. The curriculum is built up of core² subjects: English, word-building (vocabulary and spelling), mathematics, science, social studies, history and geography and Bible study. It is delivered through a series of individual subject-specific learning packages³ called PACEs.

The youngest pupils begin in the Learning to Read group and progress through mixed age learning centres⁴. Thereafter pupils follow an individualised learning programme in each curricular area by completing the PACEs relevant to their current level of competence. The flexible organisation of the learning centres allows easy movement of individuals between groups. This core learning is timetabled for about four hours every morning. The ACE programme is complemented by additional curricular provision for the afternoons which is effectively planned to include other aspects of the core subjects not covered in the individualised programmes.

This additional curriculum is planned by teachers with useful reference to the National Curriculum (NC) programmes of study. It comprises more practical experience in mathematics, science, creative writing, humanities, music, art, sport, and information and communication technology (ICT). It also includes some additional subjects such as Spanish and citizenship. The more practical focus helps to ensure that pupils experience a different balance of learning and teaching approaches during the day. To ensure that this work is planned at the NC levels generally commensurate with pupils' ages, the groups are reorganised in the afternoon lessons according to age. Provision for personal, social and health education is successfully interwoven with science, Bible studies, physical education and the everyday activities of the school. Provision for pupils with special needs is good.

As pupils progress through the ACE curriculum, there is an increasing level of choice with the inclusion of elective units which offer pupils the opportunity to pursue a particular area of interest while retaining the breadth of the core curriculum.

The curriculum is enhanced through activities after school, visitors to the school and residential and day visits outside school. The annual Convention for the network of Christian schools constitutes one of the particular highlights of the year. Older pupils are involved in a range of good quality activities in preparation for competitions in areas of aesthetic, dramatic, creative and academic performance. The Convention provides pupils with motivation, inspiration and acts as a real spur to success. The total curricular provision results in a broad and interesting learning experience for pupils.

NB. The word teacher and assistant will be used throughout this report.

² The core in the ACE curriculum refers to the subjects listed as follows.

³ Packages are published workbooks which pupils complete individually, following written instructions.

⁴ Learning centres are classrooms organised with carrels at which pupils work individually

The quality of teaching is consistently good, resulting in pupils making good progress and becoming very effective learners. The teachers' daily practice of setting targets for each individual encourages pupils to develop high expectations of themselves and builds up habits of application and perseverance.

The PACEs set out the tasks for individuals across each of the subjects and pupils swiftly learn to internalise the essential procedures for flagging⁵ that they need teaching support, or are ready to check their work at the scoring station⁶. Pupils organise their offices⁷ effectively with the necessary resources readily at hand, ensuring that time is not wasted between tasks. Teachers have successfully instilled in pupils a growing sense of responsibility for their learning, while consistently maintaining strong individual teaching support for each of them. A strong emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy with pupils utilising their increasing skills to help them learn across the curriculum. Staff interaction whether for instruction or assessment is good, enhanced by professional competence and confidence in the curricular methodology. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, contributing to pupils' enjoyment of school and motivating them to try hard at their work.

The teachers' subject knowledge is sufficiently broad to cover the range of subjects taught. The school makes good use of parents and volunteers to bring additional strengths and interests to support the learning experiences of pupils. Teachers capitalise on the opportunities to employ a different range of approaches in the additional curriculum. This in turn opens up alternative, more practical learning styles for pupils to explore and develop. It also provides opportunities for extended oral work in groups. Pupils' good attitudes to learning, developed through the PACEs are transferred to these lessons, resulting in an effective balance of achievement. These positive attitudes contribute significantly to the good progress pupils make in lessons and over time.

The ACE system of frequent and regular checking and assessment of work is thoroughly embedded across the school. Targets are set and monitored daily, giving pupils continuous and timely feedback on their progress and on areas for improvement. Teachers record the scores of each individual daily and then set the next day's targets with the pupil in the light of those assessments. Pupils have a mature attitude to assessment and are very familiar with the procedures for scoring their work and could explain how and why they believe they are making good progress. The Supervisor's Progress Card sets targets across all core subjects for the year. The scores from all the completed PACE end-of-unit tests are recorded,

⁵ Pupils have two small flags: a white one to signal that they require teaching assistance, and a union flag to signal they are ready to have their work checked.

⁶ A scoring station is a table in the centre of the room where the pupils work is checked.

⁷ Each pupil has a carrel, known as an office at which they work. It contains the PACEs on which they are working and basic equipment such as pencils, rulers and rubbers.

building up a system for tracking individual progress over time. Written reports and parental consultations help to ensure that they are well informed about their child's progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' personal development is outstanding as a result of the school's rich provision. From the youngest age pupils learn the importance of being reflective individuals, capable of thinking about their responsibility to God, others and themselves. The spiritual dimension of their lives is integral to their sense of self and is fostered through the curriculum, Bible study and devotions, and through the every day life of the school. Pupils' moral development is supported by the same means and encouraged by the excellent role models of the headteacher and staff.

Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils and staff treat each other with respect. Pupils increasingly develop their sense of self worth and a belief in their ability to achieve. The school celebrates achievement and pupils appreciate the recognition of their efforts through awards and privileges. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes, taking active responsibility for their learning from the earliest stages of their PACE work. Pupils learn about other major world faiths developing an understanding of the values and beliefs of other cultures. They study the achievements of ancient cultures and the lives of great thinkers and famous humanitarians, helping them to see exemplars of good lives lived well.

Pupils of different ages made it clear in discussions just how much they enjoy coming to school. Their good levels of attendance and punctuality are a testimony to this. They believe they make good progress which will help them as they grow up. They take pride in their work and satisfaction from their achievement.

Pupils are taught to value being part of a community and to have a sense of their duty to contribute to the well being of others as, for example, in their Christmas presentations for senior citizens. They are able to cooperate, communicate very effectively and readily support each other. Older pupils undertake work experience to learn about life in the workplace and how their individual skills and preferences might guide future career choices. Similarly, understanding aspects of financial management is considered through sessions with a specialist. Work in citizenship helps pupils to know about life in Britain and to develop increasing awareness of life in a wider diverse society.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare health and safety is satisfactory. The staff have very good relationships with pupils, contributing to the Christian ethos in which pupils feel valued and secure. The child protection policy and procedures are in place but the designated person has not received training within the last two years and updating

staff training is also overdue. Fire-fighting procedures are satisfactory and equipment is regularly checked by specialist providers but the fire risk assessment does not meet the Fire officer's requirements. The policy covering the health and safety of pupils on visits out of school takes account of guidance from the DCSF.

Staying safe and aspects of nutrition and healthy eating are explored in the ACE curriculum, with the latter also reinforced through daily snack and lunch times. Pupils believe the school has no bullying and that if there were any incidents they would be dealt with immediately by the staff. The importance of exercise as part of healthy living is developed through an effective programme of sports, athletics and swimming. The avoidance of potential dangers to health from smoking and illegal drugs is well understood by pupils.

The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has good and effective teaching and support staff with a range of suitable qualifications and experience. All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau but the original documents relating to other necessary checks were not available for scrutiny. The school has put systems in place to rectify this matter. The register which records employment checks complies with the regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises provide an attractive environment for pupils. The school makes good use of its accommodation, recently adding a well equipped ICT suite to its provision. The learning centres are designed to create good quality environments which are effectively organised to support independent learning. The small library is a valuable learning resource.

Arrangements for pupils who may become ill are adequate on a temporary basis but do not meet requirements. The school is considering how this may be remedied.

The grassed outdoor areas for pupils are pleasant recreational spaces and the adjacent farm land provides a good resource for environmental studies. The school has limited sports facilities but makes good use of local provision for swimming, sports and athletics.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides an extensive range of good quality information for parents, carers and others. The prospectus includes a useful introduction to the ACE curriculum and its learning packages, as well as an outline of the complementary afternoon curriculum. The prospectus helpfully lists the range of policies which support the school's provision. The Board of Trustees is made up of parents who

actively engage in the running of the school, contributing to the sense of community and supporting the school's aims and purposes. The school's website adds an updating dimension to its communication with parents and the wider community.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures for handling complaints meets the requirements in full.

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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 3(5)).

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

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take such information into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

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

- provide facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(1)).

School details

Name of school	Maranatha Christian School		
DCSF number	866/6001		
Unique reference number	126536		
Type of school	Christian		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1999		
Age range of pupils	2-19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40	Girls: 25	Total: 65
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1110-£2670		
Address of school	Queenlaines Farm Sevenhampton Highworth Swindon Wiltshire SN6 7SQ		
Telephone number	01793 762075		
Fax number	01793 783783		
Email address	reception@maranathaschool.org		
Headteacher	Mr P Medlock		
Proprietor	New Maranatha Christian School Trust		
Reporting inspector	Eileen McAndrew AI		
Dates of inspection	17-18 October 2007		