

Emmanuel Christian School, Blackpool

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002 as amended. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DCSF number: 888/6053
Association: CST
Date of inspection: 2nd - 4th February 2009
Lead Inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell
Team inspectors: Mr Phill Moon
Mrs Ruth Slack

Age range of pupils: 3 -16 years
Number on roll: 35
Full-time: 21 boys 14 girls
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: 1

Proprietor: Emmanuel Christian School Board of Trustees
Head teacher: Mr Rob Guinney
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The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DCSF whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections.

Information about the school

Emmanuel Christian School seeks to provide an education based on and integrated with a Christian Biblical world view. It is located in the village of Poulton Le Fylde, close to Blackpool. The school provides for pupils between the ages of three and 16. Currently, 35 boys and girls attend aged between the ages of four and 16; two pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), three in Key Stage 1, 14 in Key Stage 2, 12 in Key Stage 3, and four in Key Stage 4. The school population includes some who are identified as needing support for particular learning difficulties and one pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school in part uses the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) materials that originated in the United States and are now administered and overseen in this country by Christian Education Europe. The school emphasises its goal of working with parents through its mission statement: *'Partnering with parents by providing a distinctively Christian schooling'*. Whilst the school's aim is to *'work in partnership with parents who want a Bible centred education for their children'*, admission is open to all who value and share in this aim. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2004.

Evaluation of the school

Emmanuel Christian School is successful in meeting its aims and provides a good quality of education for all its pupils who make good progress as they move through the school. They achieve good results in public examinations relative to their abilities. Provision for pupils identified as having learning difficulties and special educational needs (SEN) is good. The teaching is of good quality and some is outstanding. Management and staff work hard to ensure that the pupils receive a positive learning experience. Pupils say that they enjoy being at the school and that they are well taken care of by the teachers. They behave well and are helpful and courteous to visitors. The school makes good use of the premises and facilities that it has available. Currently, the older pupils do not have opportunities for physical education (PE). The school has still to complete the integration of its Christian ethos into its planning. Overall the school has made some progress since the last inspection. It fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory for pupils of all ages and abilities, including those that experience learning difficulties and those who have SEN. The curriculum policy is set out clearly and succinctly in the staff handbook. It provides a clear rationale and guidance materials for staff on each aspect of the provision at each stage of the pupils' education. The curriculum is supported by an appropriate range of documents, including schemes of work for all age groups. These

documents demonstrate a number of strengths, but it is acknowledged by the school that refining them is still an area of continuing development. For example, with respect to the Christian Biblical content of the curriculum and in the senior part of the school where exam syllabuses are used, they lack detail, particularly with respect to teaching methodology. Planning in all respects for pupils with learning difficulties and SEN is good.

Overall the curriculum is broad and balanced. In most respects the subjects follow the national guidance, with respect to the EYFS, and the broad guidance of the National Curriculum at each Key Stage. A suitable range of learning experiences is provided for all ages except for pupils in Years 10 and 11 where currently they have no opportunity for PE and games. Following a recommendation made by the previous inspection, geography has been introduced for most pupils and is to be available as an examination option in Key Stage 4 in the next school year.

A particular feature of the school is the ACE individual learning programme which contributes to the pupils' experience of English, science, history and geography at all stages, with the exception of Years 10 and 11 when pupils are preparing for GCSE examinations. In the ACE elements of the curriculum the pupils work individually on self-study materials in Learning Centres at desks which are called offices, which are arranged to minimise disruption. The booklets they complete are known as Packages of Accelerated Christian Education (PACES). Pupils request help when they need it by putting a flag above their office.

All pupils have opportunities for appropriate creative development and art is provided for all pupils, including the oldest as an option for GCSE; home economics is provided in Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stages 2 and 3, art and design is taught through 'art focus days' run by visiting artists. German is available as a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 and as an examination course in Key Stage 4. Provision of a modern foreign language is subject to availability of staff. All pupils have an appropriate experience of information and communication technology (ICT). The school gives a number of opportunities for enriching the curriculum through trips and visits and a small range of clubs and activities are available. The school is aware of the need to extend the range of clubs as circumstances permit. The availability of two school mini-buses supports a good range of visits, for example, to art galleries, the theatre, an activity centre and other places of interest and value as part of the curriculum.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is appropriate and meets the needs of the pupils' different developmental stages; for the youngest pupils through 'show and tell' and religious education (RE), in Key Stage 2 through 'Golden Time', and in Key Stages 3 and 4 through 'Life Line'. The PSHE programme also includes aspects of citizenship. Appropriate provision to prepare pupils for their future education and lives is made through the careers programme. During the inspection pupils from Year 9, 10 and 11 were thoughtfully and well prepared prior to attending a careers conference. The school has recently mapped the areas of the curriculum that contribute to aspects of pupils' PSHE experience, but these have yet to be included in planning documents.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall and some of the teaching is outstanding. Teachers are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach. For the most part, pupils' response in classes demonstrates their enjoyment of learning. In most lessons and ACE sessions in the areas called Learning Centres teachers use a suitable range of strategies and resources to focus pupils' attention and encourage them to learn. In ACE sessions teachers provide good support to pupils through their well-timed interventions. Questioning is often used well by teachers to engage their pupils in the learning activities and to get them to think independently. In the best lessons, the high standard of questioning challenges pupils to make use of facts that they have previously learned to support and extend their learning. Such lessons are conducted at a good pace and learning develops quickly. For example, in a science class in Key Stage 2 pupils were challenged by the teacher to form hypotheses about solids, liquids and gases based on knowledge from previous lessons. Teachers' questioning frequently recognises the differing abilities of pupils in classes, by ensuring that questions are pitched at an appropriate level to individuals. Since the last inspection, the school has provided professional development for teachers including guidance on the teaching of small classes.

Teachers plan their work well in general, but their planning varies in its detail. For example, not all planning seen during the inspection recognised the specific needs or abilities of the pupils in the group. The best planning took account of different needs through, for example, the provision of extension homework. In a Year 9 class the well structured lesson ensured that learning proceeded at a brisk pace and the topic encouraged the pupils to consider the social and economic circumstances of others in the world in a Christian context. Nevertheless, teachers do not yet have a consistent approach to planning lessons. Biblical and Christian links were suitably planned into most lessons, but some teaching was more skilful than others at providing a natural link with these and the lesson topic. The quality of teaching and support is good for pupils who experience learning difficulties, including the pupil with a statement of special educational need. Effective use is made of all the information that the school has about these pupils to inform their support in order to ensure progress. Appropriate procedures are established for reviewing the progress of the pupil with a statement of special educational need each year, supported by the appropriate authorities.

Relationships between teachers and their pupils are generally good and this supports an ongoing dialogue in classrooms. Most lessons are conducted in very positive learning environments. This is aided by the relatively small size of the classrooms as well as the small size of classes, which encourages pupils to take a full part in the activities, to respond to the teacher's questions and to express their views positively. In the majority of lessons, teachers use praise effectively to encourage pupils and to support their growing confidence.

The quality of assessment is satisfactory and has a number of strong features. It is supported by the small numbers in classes throughout the school which ensures that teachers are able to speak to pupils regularly about their work and progress. The school keeps adequately documented evidence of assessments made, including data obtained through nationally recognised tests. Strategies for tracking pupils' progress have been established and these are being developed further.

There are comprehensive policies in place for assessment and marking, but there is a lack of consistency in teachers' application of the school's well-prepared guidelines and expectations of practice. Pupils' work is regularly marked in most cases but the marking is variable in its effectiveness between subjects and teachers. Marking and feedback is, on the whole, more thorough and useful in junior exercise books, but is less so for the seniors. There is generally a lack of documented feedback for the oldest pupils. Nevertheless, pupils say they get thorough verbal feedback on their work. Good examples of marking provided encouragement to pupils relative to their ability and fed back to them what was good about their work and what they needed to do to improve. Teachers frequently give insufficient attention to how pupils present their work. Overall, and despite clear development, the school has more to do to achieve the consistency in relation to assessment procedures identified by the last inspection as a point for development. Assessment data is not equally well used by all teachers in the planning of work to ensure that suitable account is taken of the different abilities of the pupils.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils is good. They are encouraged to gain self-knowledge through the quality of relationships, the example set by staff, and on those occasions when they are required to recognise their mistakes. Pupils grow in their faith through encouragement to reflect on the influence of God on the world and their lives through their studies, joyful assemblies and life in the school community. This is supported by opportunities to debate and question staff in lessons and in tutorial times on matters relating to faith. Self-esteem is developed through positive feedback and encouragement provided by teachers. 'Congratulation slips' in assembly acknowledge and appreciate hard work and positive behaviour and the response displayed by pupils. Because pupils make progress, their self-confidence grows as they move through the school.

Through their behaviour, pupils display a clear understanding of right and wrong. This is constantly and effectively reinforced by staff through example and positive reinforcement. Visits to the school, for example, by local policemen, help pupils to see the value of the law in the wider community. They generally value their relationships with their peers and treat each other with respect and consideration. Pupils understand that the quality of the relationships in the school depend on the choices and contributions they make. Playground behaviour is good, with pupils of different ages seen to be playing well together. Through the school's reward system pupils are able to work towards merit awards and 'on site treats' for good work and behaviour. They appreciate the trust put in them, for example, to mark their own PACES in the ACE curriculum and to feedback their scores to the teacher. Pupils show their willingness to take responsibility through the school council and the prefect system.

Pupils learn about public institutions and services through a range of opportunities provided as they progress through the school: through the curriculum and visits used to enrich learning and through citizenship for older pupils linked to their pastoral and personal development courses.

Teaching about other cultures and faiths is embedded throughout the curriculum. Examples are to be found in geography and modules on justice and racial equality taught through the RE syllabus and the 'Life Line' programme. The school has well-established links with other groups of people and schools in Africa. Visitors from Africa who attend assemblies provide a valuable opportunity for the pupils to develop an empathy with these countries. This opportunity is extended by members of staff who regularly visit church-based projects in other countries and who are able to share their experiences with their pupils on their return. Overall these experiences and opportunities provided within the curriculum enable pupils to acquire a good appreciation of their own and other cultures and to develop attitudes of tolerance for and harmony with different cultural traditions.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Pupils say that they feel well cared for and their parents agree. The school has in place a full range of carefully prepared policies which relate to health and safety and the welfare of the pupils. The school has identified staff to take responsibility for child protection and first aid. All responsible staff have received appropriate training. The school uses visits and school trips as an important facet of pupils' development and good procedures for assessing risk on these occasions are established. Fire protection, as with all matters of health and safety, is taken seriously by the school and all appropriate checks are undertaken. The premises have been appropriately checked with regard to fire safety and teachers been trained in using fire extinguishers should they be needed. Records of fire drills are maintained and each drill suitably evaluated.

All aspects of supervision are good. Registers of admissions and attendance are carefully maintained. The school has prepared a three year plan to meet its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has thorough and well established procedures for undertaking the necessary checks on staff prior to their appointment. Full records of the checks are recorded on a register in the prescribed manner.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is housed in part of the buildings formerly occupied by a much larger educational establishment. Despite many parts of the buildings being unoccupied, those used by the school provide comfortable, suitably furnished and well decorated accommodation. The school, with the support of their community and the caretaker, have worked hard to ensure that the building used by the school provides a clean and welcoming atmosphere. Classrooms are all of appropriate size to house the small teaching groups and enable a suitable range of teaching strategies to be used. Displays are generally used effectively to support pupils' learning, to celebrate their achievements and to emphasise the importance of their faith and the love of God. There are specialist facilities for art and design, ICT, home economics and science. There is also a school hall, and two Learning Centres of adequate size used for the

ACE curriculum. Outside space provides sufficient hard and soft play areas for pupils, although pupils say that they would like some sports equipment to be available at break and lunch times. The school hall is used for some PE, but most physical activities, including swimming, take place at a local sports centre.

Despite a number of parts of the adjacent premises being in poor state of repair, those used by the school are weather-proof, safe and have been appropriately checked with regard to fire safety and evacuation. The school has appropriate facilities in place for pupils who may become ill during the school day.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Information provided by the school is appropriately prepared and available to parents and prospective parents as required. In the responses to the questionnaires sent out before the inspection, and in the parents' meeting held during the inspection, the vast majority of parents say that they are kept well informed about their children's progress. Most agree that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions, problems and complaints. Information about the school, its ethos and curriculum provision is provided in an attractive school prospectus. Further details, as required by the regulations, are provided on additional sheets included with the prospectus or in letters to parents.

The school maintains careful records with respects to all aspects of the requirements for independent schools. Parents are kept informed about the progress of their children on three occasions during the school year by means of reports and a formal parents' meeting. Most parents maintain informal contacts with the school, its management and staff.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy is a clear, well prepared document. It meets the regulations in all respects. There has been one formal complaint in the last year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the two pupils in the EYFS is good. The curriculum provided is carefully planned to ensure that all required areas of learning are covered and that there is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. These are carefully woven together with the ACE phonics programme to provide a well-balanced timetable. Planning is thorough and assessments are meticulously recorded. Because the class is very small, topic lessons are sensibly conducted jointly with the Year 2 pupils. In these lessons, suitable account is taken of the needs of the younger pupils.

Teaching is good, and is occasionally outstanding. Sessions are conducted with an appropriate level of challenge, proceed at brisk pace and contain an appropriately wide variety of activities. For example, a numeracy lesson involved counting with a ball, singing number rhymes and use of a puppet to provide a practical matching activity. The pupils were engaged, well motivated and in consequence made good

progress. Child-initiated activities led into good collaborative and imaginative play in, for example, the class toy shop. Pupils are carefully monitored and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional skills and in basic numeracy and literacy. Teachers are well and appropriately qualified in all respects. Leadership and management of the provision are good and teaching assistants effectively briefed and deployed.

Pupils are well cared for and the welfare requirements have been carefully considered and are fully implemented. They have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. Pupils are made aware of the need to stay healthy and are learning to contribute in group activities. Classrooms are well-equipped, safe and secure, allowing children to thrive. For example, the 'Sunshine Room' is spacious, bright and welcoming and has attractive and relevant wall displays. There is some provision for outdoor play but it is in need of further development.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets most of the regulations for registration.

In order to meet fully the regulations in **standard 1**, the quality of the education provided, the school must:

- provide physical education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 (Regulation 1(2)(a)(ii)).

Meeting the expectations of CST

The school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of CST.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- completing the development of schemes of work by improving their detail particularly in Key Stage 4 and the process of integrating the school's Christian ethos into planning
- making more effective use of data derived from assessment to inform teaching
- raising expectations of the presentation of pupils' work throughout the school
- improving marking and written feedback to pupils by ensuring that it is consistent in quality to reflect the expectations set out in the staff handbook
- improving the outdoor learning environment for pupils in the EYFS.