

# Emmanuel School, Exeter

## 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).

<b>DCSF number:</b>	878/6048
<b>Association:</b>	CST
<b>Date of inspection:</b>	26 - 28 January 2009
<b>Lead Inspector:</b>	Christopher Schenk
<b>Team inspector:</b>	David Freeman
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	7 - 17 years
<b>Number on roll:</b>	17
<b>Full-time:</b>	11 boys 6 girls
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:</b>	None
<b>Proprietor:</b>	Emmanuel School Trust
<b>Principal:</b>	John Parker
<b>Address of school:</b>	36-38 Blackboy Road Exeter Devon EX4 6SZ
<b>Telephone number:</b>	01392 258150
<b>Email:</b>	office.emmanuelSch@virgin.net

## **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 began in 1994. Its pupils generally come from committed Christian families spread over a wide geographical area and from many different churches. The school has always been small, but numbers have declined over recent years from a peak of around 60 in 2001. The pupils are currently taught in four groups: the Juniors (Years 3 – 5); Senior 1 (Years 7 – 8); Senior 2 (Year 9); and Senior 3 (Years 10 – 12). The school 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. Older pupils prepare for the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) and nearly all of them move on to local colleges of further education or sixth forms to undertake academic or vocational courses when they leave the school. The prospectus says 'we aim to produce young people who are academically equipped to fulfil their potential; spiritually aware; and socially balanced.'

## **Evaluation of the school**

The school is largely, but not wholly, fulfilling its aims. It does not meet all of the regulations and this report gives details about a number of matters that must be rectified as soon as practicable. Pupils are diligent and self-disciplined and make steady progress in their learning as a result of the good teaching and support that they receive. The spiritual ethos of the school reinforces and develops the Christian values of the pupils' homes. While the self-study materials reflect a consistent Christian world-view, this is not apparent in the other lessons and activities. The pupils themselves are very aware that the small numbers in each age group limit their social opportunities. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, while remaining conscious of its limitations. As one parent perceptively commented: 'The school is small, not wonderfully equipped, offers limited social (friendship) opportunities for the children – but produces mature, responsible, caring students who are a credit to themselves and to the school.'

## **Quality of education**

The school provides a reasonably broad and balanced curriculum that is delivered in two distinct ways. In the mornings, pupils work individually on self-study materials at desks, known as offices, that are arranged to minimise distractions. They request help when they need it by putting a flag above their office. The booklets that they complete are known as Packages of Accelerated Christian Education (PACEs). All pupils do PACEs in English, mathematics, word building, literature and creative writing, science, and social studies, which includes elements of history, geography

and Bible study. Pupils in Senior 3, who are preparing for the ICCE, are required to follow a certificated Futurekids course in information and communication technology (ICT) and to choose some further options that include general business, health, music and art.

The school plans a suitable programme of lessons and activities to complement the ACE curriculum. These generally take place in the afternoon, though swimming and ICT were taking place in the morning at the time of the inspection and, correspondingly, pupils were doing some PACEs in the afternoon. The programme varies from term to term, so that, over the year, pupils have an appropriate range and balance of opportunities. In the term of the inspection the programme included art, games, music, swimming, ICT, personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship, geography, history, creative writing, English, numeracy, Bible study and French. Currently French is only taught to pupils in Senior 1, though last year two pupils took it at GCSE and both gained good grades. Practical science has been included in previous terms and will be on the timetable again in February so that, as the prospectus states, all pupils 'gain the basic experimental experience that is essential to supplement their theoretical scientific studies.' The lessons and activities make an important contribution to the pupils' speaking and listening skills which are good: they listen well to their teachers and to each other and they speak with confidence and a growing ability to articulate their ideas.

The PACEs provide a consistent Christian world-view, but the schemes of work for other activities only very rarely refer to the Christian principles that underpin the school. In the afternoon lessons observed, apart from Bible study, there were no explicit references to a Christian view point even though the subject matter of some lessons made such references natural and appropriate.

There is a well-planned programme of PSHE that is taught with imagination and skill. In one lesson, Senior 3 pupils applied their nutritional knowledge in an enjoyable context when they made soup from an appetising and interesting collection of raw vegetables. PSHE includes careers guidance, in line with the school's objective to encourage pupils to 'discover the career/path that best suits their personality, gifting, abilities and academic achievement'. The PSHE programme continues to develop: elements of financial awareness have recently been introduced.

Six pupils have been identified as having learning or behavioural difficulties. They are given extra help in completing their PACEs and their needs are taken into account by teachers when they plan and teach the afternoon activities.

The teaching is good. Pupils generally receive the support that they need when they are doing their PACEs. The structured materials help all pupils to make steady progress in their literacy and mathematical skills. There are usually at least three adults on hand, including a supervisor who is always a qualified, skilled and experienced teacher. However, pupils report that there are occasions when they have to wait for too long before getting help. During the mornings, one of two learning support assistants gives one-to-one tuition, mainly to those pupils with identified learning difficulties, but also to other pupils who request additional help, for example with their mathematics. Parent volunteers act as monitors, giving procedural assistance when pupils request it, and also helping them to prepare for

the tests that they take at the end of each PACE. The oral discussion that they have when revising for their tests, helps to develop their understanding. Nevertheless, the recall that they have of the content that they have studied, for example in science, history and geography, varies too widely. Some pupils remember the subject matter in detail and show understanding and interest. Others have only partial recall, which is sometimes too muddled to result in understanding.

The staff collectively have a reasonable range of subject knowledge but they are not always able to use their professional judgement sufficiently. For example, teachers with good knowledge of English and mathematics are aware of the deficiencies of some of the PACE materials in their subject but they do not feel that the system allows them to adapt the materials and use them sensibly in accordance with their professional expertise.

Afternoon activities and lessons are carefully planned and well taught. A particularly effective lesson in English used drama to deepen the pupils' appreciation of a worthwhile literary text. The school has a small, but well chosen, library that is currently not used sufficiently to extend the pupils' contacts with literature of good quality or to promote their research skills.

In the PACE work and in other lessons, pupils are regularly assessed and the assessments are taken into account in planning future work and providing additional support if necessary. The PACEs also provide a good structure for homework which is regularly given and enables parents to work in partnership with the school.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning: they are diligent, conscientious and self-disciplined. With the good support and teaching that they receive, they are able to make steady progress and achieve appropriately for their ages and widely differing abilities and aptitudes. The school intends pupils to complete their ICCE before they reach the end of Year 11. However, the demands for coverage of content are so great that some pupils find that they have to stay on into Year 12 before they can do so, even though they are hard-working and well-motivated. The school has developed good links with three colleges to whom the majority of pupils transfer and is in dialogue with them about their requirements for students embarking on advanced academic and vocational courses.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Parents report on the growth in confidence and self-esteem of their children. Christian values are evident in the pupils' relationships and in their peaceable, self-controlled and courteous behaviour. The school also provides spiritual development through assemblies, devotions and Bible study. Nearly all the staff are committed Christians and provide good role models for the pupils. In one assembly, music was very effectively used to create the right atmosphere for praise and worship.

The pupils show a high level of moral concern and accept the discipline policy implemented by the school and are willing to learn from it. Pupils appreciate the moral training they are given and agree that it is fair. Although the community of the

school is small, junior and senior pupils relate harmoniously and care for each other. They encourage each other, understanding differences in abilities and needs.

The school is involved in the local and wider community. Pupils participate in the annual Devon Arts Festival through choral speaking and drama. Last year the school won a silver medal. The pupils also learn to serve, for example by visiting an old peoples' home or taking part in sponsored walks for charity.

As well as receiving a thorough grounding in their own faith, the pupils learn to appreciate and respect other faiths, cultures and traditions. There is an effective link with a school in Kenya. Emmanuel pupils have committed themselves to sponsoring two Kenyan pupils, with whom they regularly correspond. Leaders from the school have spent time at Emmanuel and this has helped pupils to understand more about the lives of young people in Kenya. Two British Muslim university students recently visited for several days. This was an outstanding experience which was mutually beneficial in increasing understanding on both sides. On another occasion, an Iraqi asylum seeker came to share his experience of life in Iraq which broadened pupils' knowledge and understanding of that country and culture. Pupils make annual visits to Parliament as well as a range of other cultural trips, for example to see *The Merchant of Venice* at the Globe Theatre in London.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The staff care very much for the pupils and look after them well. Policies and procedures are thorough and well-thought through. The school has a full and useful policy on child protection and all members of staff have had recent training.

The pupils feel safe and secure. They are well-supervised at all times and report that there is little or no bullying in the school, and that any incidents are dealt with rapidly by staff. Risk assessments are carefully carried out to ensure the safety of the premises and for all visits out of school. Science equipment is kept in a locked shed and hazardous chemicals are stored in a locked metal cabinet within it. The equipment is tidily stored making maximum use of the limited space available. However, the metal cabinet is rusting and no longer completely secure. Healthy eating is encouraged through teaching on nutrition and junior pupils bring a fruit snack for morning breaks.

The school pays attention to fire safety and has carried out appropriate risk assessments and ensured that there are sufficient signs and fire extinguishers. However, there has been no fire drill for over twelve months. The school has made considerable improvements to the accessibility of the premises by installing a disabled toilet and ensuring that wheel-chair users have access to all ground floor areas. However, there is no written three year plan as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

### **Suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school has for some time been carrying out appropriate checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable, but has only recently put together a single central record of these checks. In doing so, it has come to light that one recently recruited

member of staff has begun work before the Criminal Records Bureau check has been completed, without first being checked against List 99.

### **School's premises and accommodation**

The school has suitable accommodation that is generous in size for the present number of pupils and consists of a former residential property and an adjacent pre-fabricated building which used to be a Brethren Church Meeting Hall. The original house provides offices, storage space, a sick-bay, a staff kitchen and three small teaching rooms. The pre-fabricated building has three open-plan teaching areas. There is little sound insulation, but extraneous noise does not cause the pupils to lose concentration even when two lively lessons take place in adjacent areas. The building also has toilets for pupils and staff that are clean, pleasant and well-maintained and equipped with soap and air fresheners. Although the wash-basins have both hot and cold taps, there is no hot water.

The playground is suitable in size for recreational purposes and is also used by junior pupils for physical education (PE). The senior pupils go to a nearby sports centre for PE as well as to the Exeter Arena for athletics. Both senior and junior pupils go regularly to a local swimming pool. There is also an art room that has recently been brought back into use by an enterprising teacher who has ambitious plans for it. However, it currently lets in water during or after heavy rain and does not have appropriate flooring.

### **Provision of information for parents, carers and others**

The school keeps parents well informed, through a weekly newsletter, a parents' handbook, yearly reports and frequent dialogue. All parents responded to a questionnaire sent out at the time of the inspection and were overwhelmingly positive in their comments and views. There was a very high turnout for a parents' meeting held on the first day of the inspection. Parents particularly value the way in which the school helps their children to grow in confidence and self-esteem, and the shared Christian ethos of home and school. The school makes its Christian commitment abundantly clear to all parents and prospective parents and there are regular monthly prayer meetings for parents and staff to worship together.

Nearly all the regulations are met, but the school does not inform parents that the particulars of academic performance in the previous year are available on request.

### **Procedures for handling complaints**

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all the requirements and all parents have been provided with copies of them, as well as with additional guidance. There have been no formal complaints within the last twelve months.

## **Compliance with the regulations**

The school does not meet all of the regulations for registration.

The school must take action to meet the outstanding regulations as listed below. An action plan should be prepared detailing the action to be taken.

In order to meet fully the regulations in **standard 3**, the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, the school must:

- carry out fire drills with reasonable frequency (Regulation 3 (5)).

In order to meet fully the regulations in **standard 4**, the suitability of the proprietor and staff, the school must:

- ensure that, where members of staff including volunteers start work before the results of their criminal record checks have been received, they have been checked against List 99 (Regulation 4(2)(d)).

In order to meet fully the regulations in **standard 5**, the school's premises and accommodation, the school must:

- supply the hand-basins adjacent to the pupils' toilets with hot water (Regulation 5 (a))
- ensure that the art room is reasonably resistant to penetration by rain and snow (Regulation 5 (f))
- provide the art room with appropriate flooring in good condition (Regulation 5 (s)).

In order to meet fully the regulations in **standard 6**, the provision of information for parents, carers and others, the school must:

- make the particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations, available to parents and prospective parents (Regulation 6 (3) (e)).

The school does not meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. In order to meet the requirements, the school must:

- draw up a written plan covering a three year period to increase over time the accessibility of the school premises and the curriculum to disabled pupils, within the resources that the school can afford.

## **Meeting the expectations of CST**

The school's religious ethos broadly meets the expectations of CST but in order to strengthen its religious ethos the school should consider:

- paying more explicit attention to the Christian worldview in the planning and implementation of lessons taught in the afternoons.