

The Vine Christian School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	872/6013
Unique Reference Number	134424
Inspection number	320397
Inspection dates	29-30 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Angela Cook

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

The Vine Christian School follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum, and caters for both primary and secondary age pupils. There are eight pupils on roll. The school shares with the church community the modern premises of the Three Mile Cross Church Centre, located on the outskirts of Reading. The school's proprietorial body of trustees, in conjunction with its management team, the members of which are drawn from the school and the church, is charged with making provision for the moral, spiritual and social welfare of the inhabitants of Three Mile Cross. The aim of the school is to support 'parents in their God-given role of educating and bringing up their children'. Parents are expected to contribute to the life of the school in a voluntary capacity. This is the first inspection of the school, which was registered in March 2004.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education and care provided by the Vine Christian School is good and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school effectively teaches the curriculum from a biblical perspective. Pupils are articulate ambassadors for their school, and their courtesy and consideration for others are outstanding. The school meets the majority of regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with a number of good features. In the mornings, pupils follow the ACE curriculum, where all work at their own levels. The ACE course provides a structured, broad and balanced curriculum, which is broken down into steps called PACEs. The PACE work, which is designed to give pupils 'harmonious academic training from God's point of view', is planned in such a way that pupils continue to build effectively on their knowledge, skills and understanding. It includes mathematics, English, word building, creative writing, science, social studies and Bible work. As the programme has an American origin and bias, staff and pupils are required to be vigilant in detecting alternative spellings, and this is managed effectively. All ages are well catered for, with the younger pupils following the ABC curriculum, which is the ACE and Christi early years programme, and the oldest pupils embarking on the International Certificate of Christian Education General Certificate. The school is developing its afternoon curriculum, which makes a

good contribution to pupils' learning. It is outlined clearly in policies and supported in some areas by well-conceived schemes of work. Some planning is sufficiently detailed to meet the different needs of the mixed age classes, but in other areas the objectives are insufficiently focused. A comprehensive twelve-year plan for the afternoon work indicates how different aspects of geography, English history and science will be covered, but it does not show how pupils will build on their knowledge and skills each year, nor does it allow for areas to be revisited for further in-depth study. The afternoon lessons supplement the workbook-based morning sessions appropriately by providing a variety of opportunities, for example art and crafts, a modern foreign language, physical education and information and communication technology. The inspector agrees with the older pupils who say that they do not have sufficient physical education. Although some aspects of personal, social and health education are taught through the curriculum, the school is aware that there is no planning to ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient information to make choices, for example with regards to sexual health or drug misuse. A partnership with Connexions provides careers guidance. The school is working to improve the opportunities and the resources for practical subjects such as technology and science, so that pupils are able to develop their planning and analytical and investigative skills. A lively daily current affairs session enables pupils to develop their ability to express their opinions cogently and to increase their knowledge and understanding of world matters.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. The carefully structured ACE course enables pupils to set their own daily goals and to assess their learning regularly. PACE tests ensure that pupils have a full grasp of each level before progressing to the next. Pupils aim for 100% in these tests and a wall chart indicates that many have achieved this high standard. The Learning Centre's quiet purposeful working environment is well managed by staff. Pupils, working in their learning stations, called offices, effectively use a system of flags to request support, and the appropriate assistance is always available. Parents are expected to spend some time working in the school. The headteacher effectively trains and manages her team, including volunteers, so that the pupils enjoy consistently good learning opportunities. Careful assessment of pupil progress is also built into the afternoon curriculum, with pupils having personal learning targets well matched to their ages and abilities, for example in PE. Teachers are innovative in the afternoon sessions, providing creative opportunities which result in stimulating and enjoyable lessons. For example, a creative writing project for the older pupils to write a radio play involved developing the vocal techniques necessary to deliver a radio script. This evolved into building a 'shadow theatre' which used back lighting to create silhouettes. Staff are trained as required by the ACE programme and a recent inspection by Christian Education Europe (CEE) indicates that the school is 'run well'.

Pupils make good progress, both in PACE work and in afternoon lessons. Pupils' very positive attitudes to work and their high level of motivation ensure that they stay on task even when they find it difficult. Individualised programmes and one-to-one support ensure all are able to make good progress. Staff check that pupils are

reaching their daily goals, and are progressing evenly across the curriculum. Any problem areas are quickly identified and additional help, for example speech therapy, is sought when required. On average, in the academic year 2006-2007, pupils achieved 95.8% in their PACE work and completed 77 PACEs. The pass mark is 80% and the number of PACEs expected to be completed each year is 70. The school data indicates that some are working at a level below that anticipated by the ACE programme for their age, and additional strategies are supporting them accordingly. Pupils are pleased with their progress and say they are sufficiently challenged. The school is in the process of implementing a new CEE electronic pupil tracking system, which will enable the school to evaluate more effectively pupils' progress over time.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Their outstanding behaviour and their obvious awareness of and concern for others reflect the strong ethos of the school. Developing an understanding of the Scriptures is central to the day, which begins with a reading and prayers. Even the youngest pupil is sufficiently confident to identify someone for whom everyone should pray, and to make up a prayer for them. Pupils are aware of other faiths and cultures, and they value others' viewpoints. For example, very topically, one pupil was quick to understand how naming a teddy bear after a prophet could cause offence. They are outward looking, kind and thoughtful, with a keen sense of right and wrong. Staff ensure that pupils develop good skills for adult life. Each pupil contributes to the smooth running of the school by taking responsibility for a daily task, such as putting out the tables for lunch or vacuuming the carpet afterwards. They enjoy being at school and attendance is good. The school has enabled pupils to achieve outstanding personal development and to understand and appreciate differences between cultures, religions and peoples.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is satisfactory overall. The policy for child protection is in place and implemented appropriately. Pupils are well supervised at all times and in all areas of the school. Pupils are valued and each is able to achieve success. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. The school recognises there is gender imbalance, with more girls than boys, and is diligent in finding good role models for all. Pupils are supported in developing a healthy diet by the provision of a fruit break in the morning and requests that packed lunches do not contain fizzy drinks. The school does not have a fire risk policy and is not undertaking fire risk assessments, nor are risk assessments routinely undertaken when pupils are taken out of school. Pupils say that there is no bullying now, and that in the past it was dealt with effectively by the school. The school has not yet developed a three-year plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Although the appointment of staff is managed with care, not all the necessary checks, for example the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and that on medical fitness, have been completed prior to staff taking up their posts. Staff awaiting CRB checks do not work unsupervised with pupils. A single central register is almost complete, providing details of the requisite checks.

School's premises and accommodation

The good, modern premises offer a light and welcoming learning environment in which pupils enjoy their studies and are able to make good progress. For the current numbers the accommodation is spacious. The décor is in very good condition, but missing carpet tiles in the doorway to the office cause a hazard. There is a small yard for outside play, and ample space for indoor physical activities, especially since the large sanctuary of the church can also be used. The school acknowledges that as it increases in size towards its registered number of pupils, a further outside play area will have to be developed. There are no specialist teaching areas other than the Learning Centre for the older pupils, and the ABC room for those between five and seven years. Physical education also occurs off site at a variety of locations including the local swimming pool and the leisure centre.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents and prospective parents with clear and up to date information about the school. The colourful school booklet is informative and is supplemented by an admissions pack.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints procedure fully complies with the requirements.

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:

- establish appropriate plans and a scheme of work for personal, social and health education (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- increase the quantity and range of classroom resources for practical subjects such as science (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare a fire risk policy and carry out a fire risk assessment, recording it and regularly reviewing it so that it is up to date (paragraph 3(5)).

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

- ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, medical fitness checks are carried out (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that enhanced CRB checks are obtained for all those working at the school, whether under contract of employment, under a contract for services, or as volunteers who have substantial contact with or substantial access to the pupils (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that all proprietors of the school have been subjected to the required checks (paragraph 4B(4) and (5))
- ensure that the single central register indicates that all required checks have been obtained for all the proprietors (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

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

- ensure that flooring is in good condition, particularly at the entrance to the headteacher's office (paragraph 5(s)).

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	The Vine Christian School
DCSF number	872/6013
Unique reference number	134424
Type of school	Christian Day School
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 2003
Age range of pupils	5-18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 1 Girls: 7 Total: 8
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2039
Address of school	Three Mile Cross Church Centre Basingstoke Road Three Mile Cross Reading Berkshire RG7 1AT
Telephone number	0118 988 6464
Email address	thevinechristian@tiscali.co.uk
Headteacher	Miss N King
Proprietor	Mr Neil Evans, Mrs Lynne Thompson, Mr. Gregory Husband
Reporting inspector	Angela Cook
Dates of inspection	29-30 November 2007