

Covenant Christian School

48 Heaton Moor Road, Stockport SK4 4NX

Inspection dates

20 April 2016

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the registration authority for independent schools, in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan.
- The school submitted its action plan in December 2015; it was evaluated in January 2016 and found to require improvement. A further action plan was submitted by the school in March 2016.
- At the school's last full inspection in October 2015, its overall effectiveness was judged inadequate.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection.
- The school was given no notice of the inspection.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher. The inspector also met with a member of the teaching staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents including school policies, risk assessments and the single central register of checks on staff.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and visited classrooms to observe learning.
- The inspector toured the premises with the proprietor.
- The focus of the inspection was the quality of teaching and assessment; the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school; the checks on staff's suitability to work with children; the provision of information and how the school deals with complaints from parents and pupils.

Main findings

Part 1. Quality of teaching and assessment

- The inspection in October 2015 found that the quality of teaching required improvement as teachers' planning did not, over time, ensure that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects. Nor did it make clear what learning and skills pupils should develop. Teachers did not have a commonly understood framework to assess pupils' progress. Teachers did not improve pupils' writing skills well enough.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor undertook to review and implement a new tracking system to monitor pupils' progress. As a result, a new online tracking system has recently been introduced at the school. Pupils' achievement in mathematics and English is now recorded in a systematic manner and this information is beginning to be used by some teachers to plan lessons. Some teachers state that they have not been trained how to use the new system and are therefore not accessing it.
- The proprietor, in the action plan, states that he will use a wide range of evidence to check the quality of teaching every half term and use the information gathered to identify staff training needs to improve the quality of teaching. The proprietor has observed the teaching in several lessons and, as a consequence, a member of staff has attended training on how to teach pupils who speak English as an additional language and how to develop writing across the curriculum.
- In its action plan, the school undertook to implement a new lesson planning format to include how the knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils would be developed. During the inspection, the proprietor stated that he had not seen the new planning format and had not checked if it had been introduced. Inspectors were not able to find evidence that teachers were

using a new form of planning. Planning that was shared with inspectors showed that in some subjects, such as art, not enough consideration was given to pupils' prior learning to ensure that skills are effectively built upon.

- Teachers of the same pupils, in the same class, who work on different days, do not effectively share their planning or what has been taught so that other teachers can build upon what pupils have previously learned.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- The October 2015 inspection found that the arrangements for safeguarding were not effective. The school's child protection policy did not give paramount importance to the safety of pupils, nor did it enable staff to understand what routes to follow if they had concerns about other adults, including the headteacher.
- In the school's action plan, the proprietor undertook to review and revise the child protection policy. The proprietor has amended the policy several times so that inappropriate wording has been removed. A section of the policy detailing routes for staff to follow to report concerns about other adults has been added. Nonetheless, the guidance about procedures to follow when concerns relate to the headteacher or child protection officer are confusing. As a result, the policy does not fully provide staff and other with clear guidance on this aspect. Furthermore, guidance about inappropriate touching of pupils is ambiguous and is open to misinterpretation.
- The child protection policy has not been shared with staff. As a result, those staff that the inspector spoke to were unaware of the substantial and important changes to policy and procedures.
- The previous inspection found that completed risk assessments of the school site and of activities that take place outside of school were not detailed enough, nor were they effective, as leaders did not check they are acted upon. A new risk assessment policy has been implemented and staff now undertake detailed risk assessments for activities that take place outside of school. In two out of three examples scrutinised during the inspection, leaders had not checked that the risk assessments had been acted upon or were suitable.
- The inspection in October 2015 identified that pupils' safety could not be assured within school as areas of risk had not been identified, nor were risk assessments being followed. The design and technology room has been tidied and all tools are now locked away. A large number of notices have been erected, warning staff and pupils of potential risks, such as steep steps. Weekly checks are now undertaken and recorded by the proprietor to ensure that all areas of the school are safe.

Part 6. Provision of information

- At the October 2015 inspection, the proprietor had not made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils the particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with education, health and care plans and for pupils for who speak English as an additional language.
- In the school's action plan the proprietor undertook to prepare and publish a document to explain to existing and prospective parents its educational and welfare provision for pupils with education, health and care plans and for pupils who speak English as an additional language. A document has been written by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and is available on the school website. The section relating to education, health and care plans is not fully accurate as it states that these plans will be 'drawn up by the SENCo'. The 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years' (Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities) states that education, health and care plans will be prepared by the local authority.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- At the October 2015 inspection, the school's complaints policy did not indicate that where there was a panel hearing of a complaint one panel member should be independent of the management and running of the school. Nor did the policy make clear how it would ensure that the written record of all complaints should include any action taken by the school (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- The school's action plan stated that the proprietor undertook to revise the complaints policy.

- The arrangements for the formal complaints panel meeting now make clear that one member must be independent of the management and running of the school. It also makes clear that written records of all complaints will include any action taken by the school (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The Department for Education's commission to Ofsted did not include part 8 of the independent school standards. However, standards in this part remain unmet.
- At the inspection in October 2015, the inspector found that the proprietor had not ensured that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school were demonstrating good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role or were fulfilling their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards were met consistently. The proprietor had not ensured that they actively promoted the well-being of pupils.
- The school's action plan indicated that the management committee would identify gaps in its knowledge and skills using a roles and responsibilities matrix. Appropriate training would then be provided and reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, staff performance would be more closely related to pupils' progress, with a formal review at the end of the year for all teachers, including the headteacher, and at the end of each term for new staff. New roles and responsibilities have now been allocated across members of the management committee. However, training to fill gaps in knowledge and skills has not been provided, nor roles reviewed, as this process is at an early stage. The headteacher has started to hold meetings with some staff to discuss the progress that pupils make in English and mathematics. Leaders intend to use this information to help inform the formal reviews of staff performance planned for the end of the year.
- In judging the success of these actions the plan stated that management members would assume clearly defined roles which together cover the whole work of the school. However, there was no direct reference to the requirement to meet the independent school standards. Members of the management committee have recently assumed responsibility for a wider range of roles than seen at the time of the previous inspection. Nonetheless, the impact of this change is yet to be seen as it is at such an early stage of implementation.
- Independent school standards including those relating to the welfare of pupils remain unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3 and 3(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that teaching at the school shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3 and 3(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3 and 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the welfare of the pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy (paragraph 16 and 16(a)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the

independent school standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection team

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Covenant Christian School describes itself as an 'evangelical learning community'. It has been an independent day school since 1981. It aims to 'glorify God in everything that concerns us, including our children's education. We hope that they will come to know and love God, therefore having an opportunity to live lives of hope, meaning and purpose.'
- The school aims to enable parents, either directly or by delegation, to teach their children.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no pupils currently being educated in key stages 1, 3 and 4.
- All pupils are taught in The Hawthorns, a large Victorian house with outbuildings, which is also the home of the proprietor.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in October 2015. In December 2015, the proprietor submitted an action plan to the Department for Education setting out the school's proposed actions in response to the findings of the standard inspection. The action plan was judged to require improvement. The proprietor submitted a further action plan to the Department for Education in March 2016, setting out the school's amended proposed actions in response to the findings of the standard inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	106158
Inspection number	10018222
DfE registration number	356/6021
Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part time pupils	None
Proprietor	Dr RS Slack
Chair	N/A
Headteacher	Dr RS Slack
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 October 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	None
Telephone number	0161 432 3782
Email address	info@covenant-christian-school.co.uk

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