

# Covenant Christian School

48 Heaton Moor Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport, Cheshire SK4 4NX

## Inspection dates

13–15 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The leadership's school improvement planning lacks rigour and clarity.
- The management committee is not able to hold leaders to account fully because the accountability system is weak.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' achievements is not sufficiently focused on the progress made by pupils. This means that it is not possible to clearly identify whether pupil outcomes are good.
- Measures taken by the leadership to improve teaching are not sufficiently effective. This is because observations of teaching do not focus on what the pupils are learning and what progress they are making.
- Teaching requires improvement because work is not always pitched at the right level, so that sometimes it is too hard and sometimes too easy.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and staff have successfully created a positive ethos in a school which offers pupils a wealth of personal, social, emotional and spiritual opportunities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The curriculum is imaginative and interesting. Pupils understand the value of contributing to society and appreciate British values. This prepares them well for the future.
- Most of the issues raised at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.
- Very good relationships result in pupils behaving well and concentrating in lessons. Pupils spoken to said that they feel safe and free from any kind of bullying.
- Parents and carers value the school highly and are unanimous in their praise.
- The proprietor, staff and the management committee ensure that the school meets the independent standards. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that all staff have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils in mathematics
  - ensuring that work is pitched at the right level for all pupils in the class
  - more precisely supporting staff to improve their teaching
  - ensuring that leaders' observations of teaching focus on what the pupils are learning, rather than what the teacher is doing.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - refining school improvement planning to ensure that priorities, expectations and lines of accountability are clear and are wholly focused on improving pupil outcomes
  - developing a more effective accountability system
  - devising a system that is easy to use and understand, to track pupils' progress over time.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school's improvement plans are not securing rapid enough improvement. This is because actions are not analysed in depth or in detail by leaders to determine their effect. Improvement-planning is not sharply focused on core priorities and does not set precise, measurable targets. As a result, lines of accountability are not clear.
- The headteacher has been successful in bringing about good improvement to the school's safeguarding arrangements and in ensuring that the school meets the independent standards. However, measures to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been less successful, and the pace of change is slow.
- The headteacher and other staff undertake regular monitoring duties. Following lesson observations, teachers are given feedback on strengths, but not consistently on areas for development. Few measures are in place to help teachers improve their practice. However, parents who act as unqualified teachers on a part-time basis receive mentoring and support.
- Subject leaders take responsibility for different subjects, but there are not enough opportunities for them to develop their skills. For example, they are not involved in monitoring the effectiveness of how these subjects are taught and helping staff to improve their practice.
- The proprietor, management committee and staff all share a very clear vision of what kind of school they want to be. They work well together and in partnership with parents.
- The curriculum is rich and rewarding. A strong focus is put on ensuring that pupils gain the necessary skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Other subjects are taught in different projects which encompass the humanities, science and technology, music, the arts and citizenship. These are very well planned and include a good range of visits to bring learning alive. For example, during the week of the inspection, all pupils visited a coal mining museum as part of the work on geography, geology and science. Other visits have included Roman Chester and Jodrell Bank Observatory.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of fundamental British values are strong because they are embedded in all subjects of the school's curriculum. Pupils discuss respect, tolerance and democracy and know what these words mean.
- Parents who made their views known are unanimous in their approval of the school. Their views are summed up by one, who wrote: 'My children have grown in faith, general confidence and in their ability to problem-solve and deal with real world issues.' Parents feel that the school is an extension of their families and know that their children are very well cared for.

## Governance

- Governance is in the hands of the management committee, which consists of the proprietor, staff and parents of past and present pupils. The committee meets monthly. Members oversee all aspects of the school's work. They review, develop and amend

policies, check on attendance and ensure that safeguarding and health and safety requirements are met, including risk assessment for activities which require them. They hear about the achievements of pupils each term, but the current tracking system does not allow them to gain a good enough understanding of the progress that pupils are making. Parents are very involved in the day-to-day running of the school and are kept fully informed about what is happening.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school.
- The school's single central record, which indicates that all necessary checks have been made on adults who work in the school, is accurate and up to date.
- Staff receive regular training, and are vigilant in observing pupils and their emotional and personal needs and making sure that these are met.
- The school's child protection policy meets requirements, takes account of all legislation and is published on the school's website.
- Those members of staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding ensure that they and others carry out their roles effectively.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- Teaching is not consistently good, because occasionally the pitch of the learning is too hard for some and too easy for others.
- Teachers are aware of the different ages and ability levels of pupils in their classes and often plan separate activities for them. However, the level of challenge could sometimes be higher from the start, especially for the most able pupils in mathematics.
- The over-use of worksheets in some work restricts the opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Teachers offer plenty of praise, and this, together with warm, positive relationships, builds pupils' confidence and enhances their enjoyment of learning.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully to allow pupils to think more deeply and explain their answers.
- Teachers have created a bright, vibrant learning environment where pupils' work is displayed and celebrated.
- Often, classroom teaching is lively and interesting because lessons have been planned to excite and enthuse the pupils. This was seen in several lessons. For example, in key stage 1 mathematics, pupils were developing skills in measuring by making princess soup; in writing, they were working to solve the mystery of the missing Mother's Day cake. In key stage 2, pupils were studying cloud formations and enjoying going outside to examine what clouds could be seen over Stockport that day.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Most pupils read to a teacher every day. There are many books on display, and a love of reading is successfully encouraged.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are welcoming, friendly and polite. They speak with confidence about their enjoyment of school, keen sense of security and feeling of well-being.
- Pupils confirm that bullying is very rare, and problems are dealt with at once by adults. They insist that there is absolutely no racism, homophobia or use of bad language in the school.
- Pupils can explain the key concepts of other faiths, and understand that different people have different lifestyles. They are tolerant and respectful of others.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in many areas of the curriculum, including e-safety, which is part of a special project called 'Man Himself'. They understand what is meant by abuse and exploitation, and are aware of the dangers of the use of social media and modern technology.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and praise their teachers, who they describe as 'amazing'.
- Devotion time each morning at assembly is a joyful celebration of the start of each day. Playtimes are happy, and pupils appreciate that there is always an adult to turn to if anything goes wrong.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils of all ages across the school behave well. They work and play happily together, supporting each other in their learning and their games. There are very few entries in the record of poor behaviour.
- Pupils respect the learning environment, and make sure that there is no litter or graffiti.
- Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school and value their friends.

## Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The school does not enter pupils for national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, because it has its own curriculum which does not precisely match the national curriculum being tested. However, teachers use past papers and informal tests to compare their pupils with all pupils nationally. These show that pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 reach age-related expectations in mathematics and writing and are above such expectations in reading.
- Currently, pupils achieve better in key stage 1 than in key stage 2. Progress in reading is above average, and it is average in writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils do not always receive the right level of challenge to enable them to

excel, particularly in mathematics.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. They thrive in small classes and have plenty of individual attention. Their progress is tracked successfully by the special educational needs coordinator.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in different projects shows that they enjoy investigating, researching and finding things out for themselves. Pupils are curious and interested in the world around them.
- Pupils' standards of attainment, which are at least in line with the national average, coupled with their strong personal development and positive attitudes to learning, ensure that they are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education.

## School details

Unique reference number	106158
DfE registration number	356/6021
Inspection number	10038836

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Roger Slack
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Roger Slack
Annual fees (day pupils)	Nil
Telephone number	0161 432 3782
Website	<a href="http://www.covenant-christian-school.co.uk">www.covenant-christian-school.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@covenant-christian-school.co.uk">info@covenant-christian-school.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	6–7 October 2015

## Information about this school

- The school is part of a registered charity called The Christian Education Trust. The trust aims to provide biblically based, Christ-centred education for all students. There are five trustees. The management committee is composed of parents and teachers and can have up to nine members.
- The school is located on the ground and basement floors of a Victorian detached house in Heaton Moor. There are several separate buildings outside the house, but within the grounds, which are occasionally used as teaching spaces.
- The school aims to enable parents, either directly or by delegation, to teach their children.

- At the time of the inspection there were two classes, one for key stage 1 pupils and one for key stage 2. Three of the pupils had joined the school only very recently.
- The school does not use alternative education provision.
- No pupils sat the national assessments at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2017.
- Monitoring inspections were carried on 20 April 2016 and 3 May 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in a range of subjects in both classes. She examined the work in pupils' books in several subject areas, and particularly in English and mathematics. She attended a devotions session and listened to pupils reading in Years 1, 2 and 6. She observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes and spoke with many informally.
- The inspector held meetings with the proprietor, who is also the headteacher, staff, pupils and members of the management committee.
- The inspector scrutinised all policies and procedures to establish the school's compliance with the independent school standards. She reviewed documentation relating to child protection and safeguarding, the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and the curriculum.
- The views of staff were gained from three responses to the Ofsted questionnaire and from discussions with teachers.
- The inspector gained the views of parents from the five responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and from an informal meeting with parents bringing their children to school.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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