

# Barnsley Christian School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	370/6001
Unique Reference Number	106659
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Inspection dates	9-10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox

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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and framework Act 1998.

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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

Barnsley Christian School was founded in 1985 as a preparatory school. It was a joint venture between two churches and is an integral part of the mission of Hope House Church in the centre of the town. It was originally intended as a school for the children of committed church members. Since 1987 it has broadened its admissions criteria and has been accepting pupils from non-practising families since 1991. The senior department was founded in 1988 and the Nursery department was opened in 1995. There are presently 85 pupils in the school, aged from three to 16. None has a statement of special educational needs, although there are a few with a range of disabilities. The school's aims and values reflect its Christian foundation. It is committed to:

- taking pastoral responsibility for all children in a loving, caring and well disciplined environment
- providing a broad and balanced Christ-centred curriculum for all children regardless of ability, age, race or gender
- encouraging all pupils to explore the Christian faith for themselves
- encouraging all pupils to fulfil their potential academically.

Due to long-term staff illness, the headteacher is presently teaching almost all of the week. The Nursery was previously inspected in January 2005, when provision was found to be of high quality. There were no significant weaknesses, although the inspection recommended that children's awareness of other races and cultures should be raised.

## Evaluation of the school

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education and, therefore, they make satisfactory progress. The students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress because there is good specialist teaching in some subjects. The curriculum and assessment are satisfactory. Pupils behave well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school promotes their personal development well. The school meets almost all of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and there are some strengths. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory for the Nursery children but it is unsatisfactory for the Reception group. The staff have made a sound start in preparing an action plan to improve the curriculum to meet the demands of the new Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum that will be obligatory from September 2008.

The school is increasingly using this curriculum for the Foundation Stage children, who are taught together. The staff have developed from this a basic long-term plan that shows the topics to be taught over the year. The medium and short-term planning broadly identifies the skills the children are to acquire but does not show precisely how they are to be taught. There is no indication of how teaching is to take into account the needs of the different groups and the different levels at which they are working. There is a focus on literacy and numeracy but too little time is spent on them, particularly for the Reception children. The curriculum is broadly the same each year, so that children have the same experiences for two and occasionally three years. The timetable does not show what is to be taught or when, and, therefore, the school cannot be sure that all areas of learning are covered. Planning of activities takes too little account of the skills to be learnt, especially by the older children. There is an extremely small outside area that is being developed for the children to use but, at present, they are unable to have access to this key part of their learning.

In the primary and senior departments, the curriculum is mainly based in the National Curriculum and covers a sound breadth. Planning is broadly satisfactory and provides a suitable basis for teaching. In many cases the school makes good use of teachers' subject expertise to teach different year groups. There is good provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), which supports their personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are some educational visits, including residential visits in Britain for the younger pupils and France for the senior department. There are few opportunities for clubs or other activities outside the school day or for pupils to take part in competitive sport.

About half of the subjects taught in the primary department have draft policies. Many have medium-term plans which show in detail the content of topics and the level of challenge. However, only a few have long-term plans that show the topics to be taught over the year. While there are two year-groups in each primary class, the school makes mostly appropriate arrangements to teach pupils in single-age groups for English and mathematics. Science is taught for only an hour a week, however, and the Year 6 results over the past four years suggest that, although the science results are satisfactory, pupils do better in English and mathematics.

There are policies in place for most subjects for the senior department, with appropriate long-term planning. The school teaches an adequate range of subjects for Key Stage 3 but the range of GCSE courses for Key Stage 4 is limited by the small size of the school. The school has considered carefully the options for some subjects

and has provided a more demanding and practical qualification for information and communication technology (ICT). However, there is insufficient provision for careers guidance for students in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. They are satisfactory for the Nursery children, and there are appropriate activities, with a balance of the adult led and independent tasks. However, it is less effective overall for the Reception children because the activities are not sufficiently different from those for the Nursery children. Therefore, the school cannot guarantee that the children build well enough on what they have learnt in Nursery. Teaching is occasionally inadequate when the children and activities are not organised or controlled sufficiently. For both year groups, some materials and resources, including the role play area, are not changed often enough to provide stimulation and variety for the children. There is a satisfactory system for staff to measure children's ongoing progress but this information is not used sufficiently to plan activities at the appropriate level for each child. Neither is it used well enough to measure the children's attainment when they start school, in order to demonstrate how well they make progress in the Foundation Stage.

Teaching is satisfactory in the primary department and, therefore, pupils make satisfactory progress; teachers have good relationships with their pupils and lessons usually proceed at a sound pace. There is some good subject knowledge, for example in French and religious education (RE). However, there are some weaknesses when the teacher has insufficient subject knowledge or does not use time well enough to support pupils in their learning. There are satisfactory systems to measure the progress pupils are making and the school uses the national assessments and tests for Years 2 and 6 to show attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. These demonstrate that the pupils' performance was similar to the national picture in English and mathematics in 2007 in Year 2. Year 6 results over four years have been average and sometimes above average. Teachers test their pupils regularly but do not use the results sufficiently to plan further work. As a result, pupils often have the same tasks whatever their ability and some, particularly the more able, say that the work they are given is too easy.

Teaching is good in the senior department, where students achieve well and reach above average results in English, mathematics, science and ICT. This chimes with the students' own views of how well they do in school. Although they regret the restricted range of GCSE choices, they appreciate the guidance they receive in making their examination course choices. The school does not provide students with thorough enough careers guidance and they feel that the support and advice they receive about sixth form and other choices is not given early enough. There is some extremely good subject expertise and lessons are often lively. However, teaching is sometimes not as good as it could be because teachers do not use their ongoing assessment well enough to target the full range of ability.

Throughout the school, teachers generally plan their work adequately but this is variable and some off-the-shelf lesson plans are used without a critical evaluation by teachers to ensure they are appropriate for the pupils. Pupils' pride in work and their diligence are promoted consistently. Consequently, pupils throughout the school take good care with their work and try their best, working with concentration and perseverance.

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

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school makes effective provision for pupils' spiritual development in line with its aims and objectives. Pupils are encouraged to realise the place of prayer in their lives. Application of personal beliefs is encouraged primarily through assemblies and specific areas of the curriculum such as citizenship, PSHE and RE. The school encourages pupils to understand and express their emotions through poetry and drama. However, as a Christian commitment is not a prerequisite for admission, some older pupils report that they do not find it easy to come to terms with the religious side of school life.

Provision for moral development has its foundation in pupils' participation in establishing class rules. These lead to clear understandings of right and wrong, which are evident in pupils' positive attitudes and their good behaviour, relationships and cooperation. Provision for social development is built on partnerships with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Friends of Barnsley Christian School. Activities include summer clubs, after-school clubs and Duke of Edinburgh's Award. A parent said that *'pupils here are good at listening to others' points of view'*. The school council, comprising representatives from all classes, is seen by the pupils as meeting too infrequently to provide them with a real opportunity to be heard. Pupils cooperate well in learning activities, in groups and pairs, being supportive and respectful of others' work. Their personal development is supported well through sessions on democracy and rights. They mostly enjoy school, although the older students feel that the school does not take sufficient account of their views or provide them with activities outside the school day. Their attendance is very good.

Provision for pupils' cultural development supports understanding and respect for other cultures. The school does not celebrate other faiths but teaches comparison and contrast of major areas of belief. The Year 11 students expressed a desire to learn about the major world religions in more detail. Other cultures are celebrated in art and drama. A parent commented that the school demonstrates *'a holistic approach to ethnic identity'*.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory and satisfactory policies and practice are in place to ensure this. These include anti-bullying, safer recruitment, educational visits with risk assessment, and behaviour. Pupils learn well about living

a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. However, they do not have many opportunities for play or exercise in the fresh air, as the school has no outside play area. Health and safety requirements and recommendations are met with the exception of the testing of portable electrical apparatus, which has not been completed, although arrangements are well in hand to carry this out. The headteacher has recently taken over as child protection officer but his current training is not up to date. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with disabilities but has no three-year plan in place to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school ensures the suitability of staff by implementing its recruitment policy effectively and recording details on a single central record. This ensures confirmation of features such as identity, qualifications, medical fitness and prior experience, before staff take up appointment.

## School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory, although there are some weaknesses, particularly in relation to the outdoor provision. The school is housed in a town-centre church building. Teaching accommodation varies in size but is satisfactory. There is a spacious room for Key Stage 2 pupils but much smaller rooms for groups in the senior department. In art and technology the shape of the room restricts movement and the range of activity. There are three large spaces providing adequate facilities for drama, indoor physical education (PE) and separate community activities. Internal accommodation for the Nursery and Reception class is satisfactory but lacks sufficient outdoor play space. Access to the Reception classroom is uninspiring, leading through a basement corridor and storage spaces. There is no suitable room for pupils who are ill. The only outdoor play space is an extremely small and inconveniently shaped area for the Foundation Stage. Although outdoor PE activities take place in local parks and at sports grounds, pupils have no outside leisure space for use at breaks or lunchtimes.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all of the regulations. Good information is displayed in the school's entrance hall.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school meets all of the regulations.

## 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:

- ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of the children in Reception (paragraph 1(2)(b))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- provide a programme of activities to meet the needs of pupils below compulsory school age in the Reception class (paragraph 1(2)(h)(ii))
- ensure that teachers take into account their knowledge of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment when planning lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- utilise the framework for assessing pupils' work regularly and thoroughly to plan teaching so that children in Reception and the more able pupils can make progress according to their ability (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

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

- ensure that the child protection officer brings his training up-to-date (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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

- provide a room for pupils who are ill, as required by the School Premises Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- provide outdoor leisure space on site (paragraph 5(t)).

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	Barnsley Christian School		
DCSF number	370/6001		
Unique reference number	106659		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	22 September 1986		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 33	Girls: 52	Total: 85
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 2	Total: 3
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 1	Girls: 3	Total: 4
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3180 - £3780		
Address of school	Fellowship House Blucher Street Barnsley South Yorkshire S70 1AP		
Telephone number	01226 211011		
Email address	hopehouseadmin@tiscali.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr G Barnes		
Proprietor	Mr Paul Dunning		
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox		
Dates of inspection	9-10 October 2007		