

Emmaus School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	865/6032
Unique Reference Number	131743
Inspection number	316928
Inspection dates	22-23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith AI

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

Emmaus School was opened in 1997 as an independent, co-educational school for pupils between five and 16 years of age. It is situated near Trowbridge in Wiltshire. The school is a member of the Christian Schools' Trust and founded on the teachings of the Bible; admission is open to pupils of all faiths. There are 48 pupils on roll but the registered maximum is for up to 60 pupils. The school aims *'to educate children to a high standard, in preparation for contemporary society, in a supportive and happy environment which caters for the needs of the individual'*. The school was registered by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2003 and this is its first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Emmaus School provides a good standard of education and care to its pupils. It fully meets its aims through provision that is caring and supportive. The distinctive Christian ethos of the school ensures that the children feel valued and secure. Teaching is good and ensures that pupils make good progress. This is achieved through an effective curriculum that is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of the pupils' wide age range. Assessment is well established and used effectively to promote further progress. Pupils are highly motivated and put their best effort to everything they do. The personal development of pupils is outstanding and by the time they leave the school they have matured into thoughtful, caring and responsive young adults. Parents are justifiably unanimous in their support for the school; pupils also say they are very happy to be at the school. The school meets all but one of the regulations.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum, which enables pupils to be taught effectively and ensures they make good progress. Christian principles are embedded throughout the policies and schemes of work for each subject. The curriculum itself is sufficiently broad and enables older pupils to sit for GCSE accreditation in a wide range of subjects. The formal curriculum is further enhanced by a range of complementary, educational visits to places such as the Tate Modern.

The provision for the personal development of pupils is outstanding. By the time they are ready to leave pupils have matured into thoughtful and caring young adults, well prepared to meet the challenges of their next phase of education.

Older pupils have insufficient opportunity to undertake work experience that is organised by the school. Additionally the school provides insufficient careers advice for this group.

Teaching and assessment are good. The challenge of having a wide age range within each teaching group is met well by all teachers. Teachers achieve this through good planning of schemes of work and put these into effective practice using their expertise and experience. Where possible, older pupils are taught individual subjects by teachers with specialist knowledge, for example in science and art. In 2007 pupils averaged 8 GCSE passes at the higher grades. Since 2002 there has been a year on year improvement in the number and grades of such accreditation. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to receive supplementary tuition through the use of on-line support from specialist providers.

Pupils are taught in small groups and benefit from the individual attention that this allows. They are confident and enquiring learners; where they might not understand something they actively make this known. Teachers are effective communicators and present topics using methods that are accessible to the range of pupils in each group.

A particular strength of the teaching is the consideration given to the range of attainment within each year and class group. Work is matched well to the needs of each pupil. A further strength of teaching is that teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject that enables them to extend the knowledge and understanding of each pupil. Teachers rarely accept the first answer given as the sum total of each pupil's knowledge, but use this as the starting point to further the pupil's understanding. Conversely, where pupils do not understand, teachers vary the ways in which the knowledge is presented. This impacts well on pupils' attitudes to their learning and corresponds to the caring ethos within the school.

The attitude of pupils to their learning is outstanding. They are keen and responsive and clearly enjoy what they do. They experience success and encouragement that develops more enthusiasm for learning. This enables them to develop the skills to work independently; these serve them well in the later stages of their time at the school.

Assessment practice is good and embedded within the teaching practice. It enables teachers to have good understanding of the achievements of their pupils and to plan their next stages of learning. Marking of pupils' work is generally good. It is carried out conscientiously but in some instances it is insufficiently informative and does not tell the pupil how they might further improve their work.

Pupils make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy. This reflects the emphasis given to these areas of learning. The most recent comparative test data indicates that many pupils achieve higher than average scores in these areas.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes rich provision for the personal development of its pupils and as a result this aspect is outstanding. Pupils say they are happy to be at the school and the enthusiastic ways in which they go about their work and play reinforces this view. Their attendance rates are also high, with no unauthorised absences recorded within the last year. Throughout the school pupils are encouraged to reflect about their responsibility to God and their Christian principles. They put these into practice in all their dealings with their peers as well as adults in the school. The spiritual dimension is robustly promoted throughout the school and this impacts well on the self-esteem of pupils and their confidence in dealing with others.

The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This reflects their enjoyment of being at the school. In the playgrounds and classrooms pupils show considerable care towards each other. This deep-rooted confidence in their self worth gives them the capability to extend their achievements. The school promotes this by recognising achievement at all levels. Pupils bring these feelings of self worth to the ways in which they go about their work. Their attitudes to work are also outstanding. All pupils show a keenness and enthusiasm for learning in ways that show them to be confident and enquiring learners.

Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures and this adds a depth and appreciation to the views of their own faith. Through work they undertake in art, history, geography and Bible study pupils gain an appreciation of the culture of others as well as the lives of great philosophers and humanitarians. The work undertaken in citizenship enables pupils to understand the diverse society in which they live.

The school successfully promotes a sense of community in pupils. Its Christian principles are embedded within this. It has active, but not exclusive, links with other Christian organisations and supports their work through charity fund-raising events. For example, pupils raised a considerable sum for a national heart charity.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. All required policies are in place and these are implemented rigorously with sensitivity towards the age of the pupils; their effectiveness is enhanced by the quality of relationships within the school. Safeguarding procedures are secure and the nominated person has undertaken recent and relevant training. Pupils indicated there are adults to whom they could turn if they felt they had any problems.

The school pays due regard to health and safety of pupils and this includes responding to the guidance offered by the DCSF in aspects such as educational visits away from the school and healthy eating initiatives. In the latter the school has successfully engaged the support of parents in the provision of healthy snacks and packed lunches. The school ensures that it too plays its part in teaching pupils about the benefits of healthy diets. The advantages of exercise are also promoted well, though some of the pupils in Key Stage 4 believe there could be more timetabled physical activity.

Teaching pupils to stay safe forms an integral part of the curriculum. Other aspects of safety awareness, such as enabling pupils to gain cycling proficiency awards, are also provided. The dangers of misuse of drugs and the effects of smoking are understood well, particularly by older pupils. Pupils do not believe there are any instances of bullying within the school. The quality of friendships as well as pupils' wider relationships would substantiate this view.

The school does not yet fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has effective procedures in place for the appointment of staff. All staff, including volunteers, have received clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau. The school has put in place the required single central record indicating that all appropriate checks have been carried out.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a former village school that has been expanded through the addition of a demountable classroom. The accommodation provides a safe and effective environment in which pupils can learn. There are plans in place, approved by the local authority planning department, to extend the accommodation further. The limited size of the site means that pupils have to use a nearby field for games that require more space. The school has responded well to issues raised within its registration process and has provided a dedicated facility for pupils to study science.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents and others are provided with a range of good information about the school as well as the progress of their child. Annual reports offer a good balance between evidence and opinion. Responses by parents indicate they are pleased with the quality of these reports. Wider information for parents is available through the school's website as well as brochures which the school offers. In both cases all the required information is included. Parents are made aware of the full range of information they can request.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a fair and understandable complaints procedure that fully meets the requirements. There have been no formal complaints received by the school within the last academic year.

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:

- provide appropriate careers advice for pupils of secondary age (paragraph 1(2)(g)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the consistency of marking of pupils work in ways that enable them to improve its quality
- provide more frequent opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to undertake physical activities.

School details

Name of school	Emmaus School
DCSF number	865/6032
Unique reference number	131743
Type of school	Christian
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1997
Age range of pupils	5-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 21 Girls: 27 Total: 48
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,756
Address of school	School Lane Staverton Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 6NZ
Telephone number	01225 782684
Email address	info@emmaus-school.org.uk
Headteacher	Mrs M Wiltshire
Proprietor	Emmaus School Ltd.
Reporting inspector	Thomas Smith AI
Dates of inspection	22-23 November 2007