

Greater Grace School of Christian Education

Church Lane, Backford, Chester, Cheshire CH2 4BE

Inspection dates

9–11 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- At the time of the start of the inspection, the proprietor, trustees and headteacher had not ensured that all independent school standards were met consistently. They completed a small number of actions, so all standards were met before the end of the inspection.
- Trustees do not provide leaders with the degree of challenge and support that they need to ensure that school improvement takes place effectively and efficiently enough.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is superficial. Their plans for school improvement are not sufficiently detailed.
- The design of aspects of the school's curriculum, relating to subjects taught outside the core curriculum, is not detailed enough to ensure that pupils' skills are developed effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good. Pupils make strong progress through the school's core curriculum in subjects such as English, mathematics, history and geography, and produce work of a high standard.
- Adults are responsive to pupils' needs. They provide a warm and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and cared for well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and make effective use of opportunities to plan the pace at which they work. They behave well both in class and around the school site.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet statutory requirements. Parents and carers confirm their children feel safe in school.
- Assessment of pupils' performance in the core curriculum subjects is effective and supports pupils' learning well.

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 leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school’s self-evaluation processes and plans for development are strengthened to drive school improvement effectively
 - refining the design of the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive the challenge they deserve in subjects which are not part of the school’s core curriculum
 - ensuring that trustees provide leaders with appropriate challenge and hold them closely to account for the impact of their actions to improve the school, particularly those relating to the design of the curriculum and pupils’ learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The proprietor and leaders acted quickly to rectify the minor unmet standards identified during the inspection. These did not pose a health and safety or welfare risk to pupils, nor did they impact on pupils' academic progress. Consequently, as a result of the proprietor and leaders' actions, all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher is a dedicated and experienced leader who works effectively with trustees to promote pupils' development. Her commitment to the school is recognised and appreciated by parents and carers. A parental comment, reflecting the views of others, noted the 'incredible commitment of the headteacher'.
- Leaders, including trustees, are committed to the development of the school. However, they do not evaluate, in enough detail, the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. This is because of the superficial nature of school's processes for self-evaluation and development planning. As a result, school improvement is not rapid enough.
- There is a culture of high expectations in school. Leaders provide teachers with valuable training to support their professional development. Leaders encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and work with teachers to identify appropriate aspirational targets.
- The curriculum meets the requirements of the independent school standards and provides pupils with experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. However, leaders have not ensured that the design of the curriculum for activities outside the school's core curriculum is strong enough. As a result, pupils do not always receive the challenge they need to achieve the standards of which they are capable in these activities.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. All those spoken with during the inspection said that they were proud of the progress they are making and value the opportunity to agree the pace at which they work.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their support of the school. They value the regular reports they receive outlining their children's progress. Parents appreciate the positive impact to their children of the range of visits they undertake to enrich their learning. For example, trips to the military museum and a local boat museum.
- Leaders promote equality well. The school's equal opportunities policy and other associated policies pay appropriate regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act. These policies and the school's curriculum are consistently implemented to ensure that pupils' tolerance and understanding of all protected characteristics are effectively developed.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate impartial advice and guidance about their future choices in education, employment and training. Pupils undertake work experience and visit careers events. Such activities enable them to make informed choices about their future careers or education.
- The headteacher and trustees promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the curriculum. For example, opportunities are provided to

ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of a variety of faiths. Fundamental British values are woven effectively throughout the teaching of citizenship and this ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils enhance their understanding of the rule of law by learning from a visiting police officer.

- Leaders keep records of the rare occurrences of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying. They review these records regularly to ensure that they identify any trends and take appropriate actions to prevent reoccurrences.

Governance

- The trustees are also the governing body of the school. They aim to provide ‘...a child centred and rounded education, seeing students as individuals’. Trustees are ambitious to develop the school further in the future.
- The trustees have a secure knowledge of the requirements of the independent school standards and safeguarding because they receive regular training. As a result of their improved knowledge and understanding, trustees have made suitable improvements to the school’s premises and the procedures for the safeguarding of pupils.
- Trustees have not ensured that leaders are held sufficiently accountable for the impact of their actions to improve the school by providing the degree of challenge and support needed. Minutes of trustee meetings show that trustees do challenge and support leaders effectively in ensuring improvement in safeguarding and premises management. However, this is not the case in other areas, such as teaching and learning and regarding the outcomes of pupils in subjects not in the school’s core curriculum. Here the levels of trustees’ evaluation and challenge are weaker.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that the school’s safeguarding policy pays due regard to the most up-to-date guidance from the Secretary of State and that it is published on the school’s website.
- The leader for safeguarding is well trained and has a clear understanding of her role in keeping pupils safe.
- Procedures to recruit staff closely follow statutory guidance to ensure that those who are appointed are suitable to work with children.
- Well-trained staff are knowledgeable about a wide range of potential safeguarding risks, such as the threats posed to pupils by extremism. Staff are vigilant and swift to act to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Much work has been undertaken to improve the safety of the school. As a result, the site is secure, well maintained and the entry of visitors is controlled effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils settle quickly to their work each day because teachers and other adults consistently implement the school’s rules and expectations relating to behaviour. Pupils listen carefully to the guidance that is provided by teachers during lessons and act well upon it.

- The junior and senior classrooms are bright, engaging and well resourced. Display is used effectively to develop pupils' understanding in subjects such as religious education, mathematics, science and English.
- Teachers promote learning effectively, particularly in the school's core curriculum. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge in a broad range of subjects such as English, literature, science, mathematics and social studies. Pupils present their work to a good overall standard and handwriting is typically neat.
- Learning activities which are not part of the school's core curriculum, such as design technology, do not always take account of pupils' capabilities, prior knowledge and understanding. As a result, they are not always challenging enough and consequently limit pupils' progress.
- Teachers enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding by making effective use of learning outside the classroom, particularly in science. For example, during the inspection, the senior class developed their scientific knowledge of seed dispersal and germination through practical activities in the school garden.
- Pupils benefit from visits to museums, other schools, local cities and sports centres. These activities help to enrich their curriculum and provide opportunities for the small number of pupils in the school to engage with other children to develop their social skills.
- Teachers promote well pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils develop their understanding effectively in areas such as health and nutrition because of the quality of teaching they receive. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Classrooms are rich in literature and pupils are encouraged to read both fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils receive effective support from teachers to develop a broad range of reading skills. As part of the curriculum, pupils read an increasingly challenging range of texts, which develops their vocabulary and supports their understanding across a range of subjects in the curriculum.
- Pupils develop confidence and skills in speaking and listening effectively. Pupils prepare and lead oral presentations on subjects such as natural features in the United Kingdom, life in Edwardian times and the Magna Carta.
- Regular assessments in the core curriculum are well designed to ensure that teachers have a secure understanding of pupils' progress and attainment. However, in subjects which are not part of the core curriculum, assessment is not as well designed or used. Consequently, teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of pupils' capabilities or the progress they make in elements of some subjects.

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 proud of their school and value the education that they receive. Pupils aspire to the qualifications the school provide and are ambitious to achieve highly.

- Pupils get on very well with each other and say that there is no bullying in school. They are confident that the adults in the school are able to support them when problems arise.
- Pupils frequently take responsibility for assessing many aspects of their own work, particularly within the school's core curriculum. Pupils study a range of personal development topics through the school's core curriculum, including conflict management, building relationships and happiness. As a result, pupils are confident to make informed decisions and positive choices.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of British values. They learn about tolerance and respect for others as part of their 'devotions'. They study many aspects of British history and customs. For example, pupils greatly enjoyed a visit to Chester to observe a visit by the Queen. Prior to attending, pupils developed their understanding of the role of a constitutional monarchy through a study of the British royal family.
- The school's core curriculum places great emphasis on developing pupils' positive character traits, such as resilience and respect. Pupils understand the value of these traits and know that such traits will help them to develop good workplace skills in the future.
- All parents spoken with during the inspection said their children were happy in school and felt safe.
- Leaders ensure that the promotion of pupils' physical, emotional and mental health and well-being is effectively woven into the school's curriculum. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities to consider ways in which to keep their bodies and minds safe from harm. For example, they explore the dangers of drugs and tobacco, the importance of healthy eating and e-safety. As a result, pupils understand about healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe both in the real world and online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school's behaviour management systems are implemented consistently, they reinforce accountability and promote a spirit of 'second chances'.
- Attendance is above that seen nationally and persistent absence is rare. Pupils are punctual and well prepared for their lessons. They settle quickly to their tasks and work hard.
- Pupils greatly value the rewards they receive for academic achievement and for good behaviour, such as extra privileges. Pupils also receive stickers and certificates which they are proud to display in their workstations.
- Teachers discuss with pupils how their behaviour choices affect others. As a result, pupils develop skills of empathy and treat each other with respect, both in the classroom and around the school site.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, work in pupils' books shows they make good progress from their starting points, developing a broad range of skills across the core curriculum. However, pupils make weaker progress in subjects which are not part of the core curriculum, such as design technology and the practical application of their knowledge and skills. Work in

pupils' books and files showed slower progress in these. Moreover, pupils sometimes struggled to explain how they were being challenged in their thinking.

- Pupils make effective use of a wide range of opportunities to develop well their reading skills. Pupils swiftly consolidate and are able to apply their knowledge of the sounds that letters make because of effective teaching they receive. Consequently, as pupils move through the school, they become confident and fluent readers who have experience of a wide range of reading material.
- Pupils develop their writing skills well and regularly produce interesting creative and factual writing. During the many extended writing sessions, pupils frequently put forward their own arguments and back these up effectively with evidence from what they have learned in other subjects.
- Pupils develop linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative knowledge well through the school's core curriculum. As a result, the school's own performance information shows that pupils make effective progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future education, employment or training. By the time they leave school, nearly all pupils have successfully completed qualifications linked to the school's core curriculum.
- A high proportion of pupils go on to study at further and higher education establishments because of their good overall academic development, which is complemented by well-developed workplace skills.

School details

Unique reference number	131791
DfE registration number	896/6027
Inspection number	10101081

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	5
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Trustees of Greater Grace School of Christian Education
Chair	Mr Alastair Craddock
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Mulligan
Annual fees (day pupils)	First child: £2,904 Additional children: £2,412
Telephone number	01244 851797
Website	www.wix.com/greatergraceschool/ggs
Email address	greatergraces@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	18–20 October 2016

Information about this school

- Greater Grace School of Christian Education is situated in a small village near Chester.
- The school is registered to admit 14 pupils aged from five to 18 years. There are currently five pupils on roll, aged between eight and 16 years.
- Pupils are taught in two classes, one for pupils of primary age and one for the older pupils.

- There are very few pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the inspector cannot report on the quality of this provision or outcomes for these pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school states its desire 'to serve the Body of Christ by complementing the parental responsibility to train up a child in the way he should go'.
- As a condition of admission, at least one parent must be a 'born-again' Christian and regularly attend their own local church.
- The school follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) individualised Bible-based curriculum.
- The previous standard inspection took place in October 2016.
- The school organises physical education off-site.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice to the school.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in both classes in the school. The inspector checked work in a range of pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector held meetings with trustees, who are also governors. This included a meeting with the chair of the governing body. The inspector also met with the headteacher and the senior and junior teachers working in the school.
- The inspector scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation, including policies, planning, documentation relating to the leadership and management of the school and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. She scrutinised the school's records and systems to check the suitability of adults to work in the school.
- The inspector spoke formally with pupils, as well as informally during the school day, and observed them during breaktimes.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey or written responses to the questionnaire given to parents to report on findings.
- The inspector met with parents to discuss their children's education and safety in school.
- The inspector considered the four written responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.
- The inspector made a thorough tour of the school's premises.
- The inspector met with the leader for safeguarding and scrutinised a range of safeguarding information, including the school's register of checks on staff, volunteers and trustees.

Inspection team

Gill Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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