



Barnsley Christian School

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002 as amended. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DfE number: 370/6001
Association: CST
Date of inspection: 27th - 30th September 2010
Lead Inspector: Dr L Phillips
Team inspectors: Mrs R Slack
Mr A Rehman

Age range of pupils: 4-16 years
Number on roll: 72
Full-time: 35 boys 37 girls
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: 0

Proprietor: Mr P Dunning
Head teacher: Mr G-J Barnes
Address of school: Hope House
2 Blucher Street
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 1AP

Telephone number: 01226 211011
Email: admin@barnsleychristianschool.org.uk

The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DfE whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of The Bridge Schools Inspectorate on the Ofsted website.

Information about the school

Barnsley Christian School is part of the Hope House Church mission and the church and school make joint use of the buildings. In 1985, when the school was founded, the school's pupils were mainly from Christian families most of whom were members of two local churches. The school now also includes pupils from local families both Christian and not. The school continues to provide education for pupils according to Christian ethics, morality and belief. Staff and governors aspire to provide a loving, caring and well-disciplined environment supported by a broad and balanced Christ-centred curriculum. The school aims to encourage pupils to explore the Christian faith for themselves and to fulfil their potential academically.

Evaluation of the school

Barnsley Christian School (BCS) is a welcoming, inclusive community. Parents say that they understand the school's aims and that it represents their views and family values. A typical comment from one parent is that, 'The school fosters and develops individuality', and from another that, 'BCS provides my child with the values, morals and standards that I expect at home.' The school generally meets its aims and is working to improve further.

In response to the care they receive and the calm environment of the school, pupils behave very well. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is courteous, confident and sensible. The school ensures that its pupils are safe and parents are confident that their children are well cared for. The quality of education overall is satisfactory. The school's work to support pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Attention given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education means that their personal development is good.

The school has improved on a number of areas highlighted in the previous inspection. Child protection training is up-to-date. The premises have been improved in a number of ways, and in particular the school now provides a room where pupils who become ill can be looked after. The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is now good: pupils are clearly enjoying the well planned activities and making good progress. Curriculum planning has been improved throughout the school. The assessment of pupils' work in a way that makes it clear how well they make progress is still in the early stages of development and consequently the school does not meet regulatory requirements. Older pupils benefit from regular, professional careers guidance. However, the school recognises

that some older pupils are not gaining as much as they could from their education and that some of their parents have concerns.

The school has developed a small outdoor play area for children in the EYFS and in Years 1 and 2 and, although limited, it is used very well. The school is unable to meet the requirement to provide an outdoor leisure space for older pupils because of its location. However, the newly refurbished sports hall is used for play at break and lunch times, and the school arranges a wide variety of outside experiences for pupils.

Quality of education provided

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall so that pupils make broadly expected progress from their starting points. The curriculum is good in the primary phase and remains satisfactory in the senior school because the impact of curriculum changes, including the improved careers guidance, has yet to be reflected in older pupils' progress and on their sense of being prepared for life after school.

Staff have worked with energy to improve the curriculum throughout the age range. The curriculum for primary and senior pupils has been very well planned. An overall curriculum vision is reflected in detailed schemes of work from which teachers have developed the year's lesson plans. The curriculum is very effectively implemented in the primary phase so that lessons are generally lively and engaging. Pupils study a satisfactory breadth of subjects which ensure that they have the opportunities to develop the key skills needed for their future life. The school follows the National Curriculum in both the primary and secondary phases of the school. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study GCSE courses in English Language and Literature, mathematics, double science, religious education (RE) and French. In addition pupils can choose between art and drama GCSE and between history and geography GCSE. Pupils follow an accredited information and communication technology (ICT) course and have a double physical education (PE) lesson each week.

Although the size of the school limits choice somewhat at Key Stage 4, the school has made efforts to extend the provision by working with an external partner so that pupils can choose to take GCSE qualifications in drama, dance and music outside school. It works with Connexions to enhance its careers advice and now has arranged work placements for Year 10 pupils for next year. Pupils in Year 11 now have a weekly careers lesson but the impact of careers education on pupils' aspirations and their clarity about opportunities post-16 is not yet established. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well founded in the primary phase and in Key Stage 3. It is not taught as a separate subject at Key Stage 4 which limits the range of opportunity for older pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and on their place in the national and international world.

The school significantly enhances its curriculum with a broad range of outside visits and visitors to the school. A display in the school foyer records the recent visit of the local fire engine to school: a visit designed to raise pupils' awareness of safety as well as understanding the work of people in their community on their behalf. In the current term, Year 10 and 11 pupils have seen a Shakespeare play, other pupils

visited the Yorkshire Mining Museum where they explored the importance of coal and gained a better sense of the history of their local communities. Over a typical year, the school organises a large number of extra-curricular activities, visits and residential stays. Destinations include a local farm, art galleries, museums, the Yorkshire sculpture park, adventure parks, the Peak District national park and seaside towns. Pupils' activities are captured in photo-collages displayed straight away for parents and pupils to talk about together.

The school does not hold many clubs on site and some parents would like to see more. However, older pupils take part in the popular Youth Club which is organised by the church and the school makes much effort to widen pupils' experience.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, sometimes good and at times outstanding. As a result pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time in the school and some pupils make good progress. In good lessons, teachers plan to use a range of resources and activities to engage pupils' interest and involvement. Teachers are active in talking with groups and individuals, checking their understanding and prompting them to elaborate on a thought or argument so that pupils become better able to explain what they mean and develop their understanding of concepts.

Lessons are less effective when they rely on teacher talk and worksheets: pupils are willing to work but they become bored fairly quickly because they have no active involvement and consequently their progress is significantly reduced. On occasions when carrying out independent research pupils are given little guidance so that their task is aimless and they make little or no progress in their acquisition of knowledge or skill.

Some teachers are energetic, focussed and able to use a wide range of teaching skills. In other lessons, opportunities are missed to extend learning and to provide really interesting activities. The school is aware that the examples of good teaching could be disseminated across the school but to date it has not been able to give time to managing that dialogue and sharing of good practice. As at the last inspection the headteacher continues to teach a very full timetable. Consequently, this significantly reduces time available to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

The school is beginning to build on its good curriculum planning to improve the effectiveness of teaching. Each year-group teacher and subject teacher uses some form of assessment to understand and report on pupils' achievements, but a coherent overall system to monitor progress from year to year and across subjects is still in early stages of development. Marking is detailed and helpful in some subjects, for example in English, but is inconsistent across the school. Similarly, although lesson plans often indicate how work might be adapted to take account of pupils' abilities, that differentiation is not often seen in teaching. The school has begun to implement a more focussed system of assessment which helps teachers and pupils understand more quickly where learning is secure and also where more teacher support is needed. Current assessment systems do not allow the school to adapt lessons sufficiently to be sure that all pupils make good progress. Pupils almost always pass their GCSEs with grade C and above and attainment at the end of Year 11 is consistently above local and national averages, but the number of pupils in each cohort is small and can vary year on year, and the school does not

know if all pupils have reached the high grades of which they are capable. Occasionally, in previous years, pupils in Year 11 have not gained the number of GCSE passes they had been expected to. Some older pupils and their parents reported that they did not feel sufficiently prepared for life after school. The school intends to revisit much of its work to ensure that its recently improved careers guidance together with a review of progress allows pupils to reach their personal aspirations.

There are no pupils with statements of special educational need at the school, but staff have identified a small number of pupils who would benefit from additional help. The school gives extra support after discussions with parents and carers, and increasingly calls on guidance from outside specialists. The new special educational needs co-ordinator is approaching the task of meeting the needs of these pupils methodically and with energy.

The school does not meet the regulation which expects a framework to be in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, using the information from such assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school is seen as a ministry of the church and the two work very closely together. When parents apply to join the school, even if they themselves are not Christians, they are expected to attend an 'Envisioning evening' and also a church service so that they fully understand the rationale and perspective of the school. The annual School Sunday is attended by all parents and pupils and is an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the past year.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils' spiritual development is strong, with the Christian ethos of the school permeating much of the teaching and pupils, from both Christian and non-Christian families, clearly enjoying the weekly praise party and the Junior Alpha course. Pupils receive a thorough grounding in the Christian faith. In the senior part of the school, where many of the pupils are also not from a Christian background, staff work hard to ensure all are respected as individuals and are given a sense of self-worth. It is, however, difficult to maintain the spiritual momentum with only one assembly a week and the curriculum for older pupils being largely focussed on examined courses. The very good work being done in Key Stage 3 PSHE and RE, looking at big life issues, is not continued into Key Stage 4 when the pupils are reaching the stage of maturity to be able to tackle such issues in much more depth. Although the RE examination course offers opportunities to consider other world views, many older pupils do not feel that they have sufficient opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and consider other views.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good in class and around the school and they show a clear understanding of right and wrong. This is effectively reinforced by staff through their own high standards of Christian behaviour. Older pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the school council, but it has met only infrequently and, understandably, pupils' perception is that their voice is not being heard. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is well above average. In the main they are confident

and articulate, and are developing the basic skills to prepare them for adult life. One parent commented that the school provides, 'an environment that fosters and develops individuality, where all children are encouraged to care for one another and recognise each other's uniqueness.'

The school's link with the charity 'Adopt-a-Child' and its sponsorship of a boy in Guatemala helps pupils to appreciate the struggles of those in developing countries and find creative ways to support them. Involvement in the local community is a high priority for church and school alike and the school's town centre location makes this a natural outreach activity. For example, pupils sing carols to the senior citizens' club and older ones are involved in Urban Synergy, a practical project to improve the environment of run-down areas in the town. The vibrant church youth group, Reverb, is attended by the majority of the older pupils.

The wide range of trips and activities offered by the school increases pupils' understanding of British institutions and culture. For example, seniors spend a week in London where their visits include the Globe Theatre and the Houses of Parliament. Pupils have recently enjoyed an 'Experience Day' in Sheffield, to reinforce their French lessons. A sense of Britain's continental links is gained from the local European Market and the whole school is involved in an annual European Day of Languages. The school organises trips to Paris and Normandy every few years. Pupils visit the local park frequently where they plant flower bulbs and trees to make a personal contribution to the natural life and colourful displays in their local community. In Key Stage 3, pupils study a module on other religions, but this is not yet developed into a more mature approach to other worldviews in Key Stage 4. Opportunities are also missed to benefit from an understanding of the range of communities in the Yorkshire region so that the older pupils are better prepared for the multicultural environment they will study or work in during the next stage of their lives.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good.

Staff take great care over pupils' welfare. Parents spoken with were full of praise for the way their children were cared for. 'The school's inclusive approach permeates its entire ethos and respects the rights of each child. I feel that my child's educational and welfare needs are best met at this school.'

The school helps pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles in a number of ways. Pupils learn about healthy eating in science and PSHE. Parents receive suggestions from the school about their child's lunch box and those spoken with said they found this helpful. All pupils benefit from PE and games: the school offers twelve different sports including basketball, hockey and football. The newly refurbished sports hall in the school is used by primary pupils; senior pupils make use of the modern, fully fitted gymnasium at the nearby Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building. Opportunities are taken to discuss personal and social responsibility and the school has developed links with community services. Officers from the police and fire services give talks in school. The level of mutual respect in the school is reflected in harmonious relationships between pupils and with adults.

Pupils say they are kept safe in school and their parents agree. All parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were safe and well cared for. The fabric of the building is well maintained so that it is safe to move around, and access to the school is carefully monitored. Fire drill logs are up-to-date and show that procedures are effective. Pupils spoken with reported that bullying is extremely rare and minor incidents are resolved quickly. However, recording of such incidents is not consistent and does not always explain how matters were satisfactorily resolved. The anti-bullying policy is clear and detailed but could still be improved, for example by the addition of the acknowledgement that bullying is in the first instance defined by the child or person receiving it, and also by a recognition that incidents should be clearly resolved. The school regularly updates its policies relating to child protection, prevention of bullying and ensuring health and safety, and in general these are comprehensive. The designated child protection officer and all members of staff have received appropriate child protection training. Pupils are supervised well in the school and risk assessments are completed for all educational visits.

The school has a three year accessibility plan which conforms to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All procedures to check on the suitability of staff are in place. Records are kept meticulously and documentation is thorough.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

Premises and accommodation meet almost all requirements. The school is in an unusual building in that it is an amalgam of a Victorian church and the adjoining building of quite different proportions. It is not purpose built, but it meets current needs, and the health and safety of pupils are carefully managed. Some rooms are small but of an adequate size for the numbers currently on roll. The school's building is linked to the premises used by the Church but this shared use causes no problems to school activities.

Generally, the standard of decoration is good and furniture is appropriate to the needs of pupils. Classrooms are kept at suitable temperatures, are well lit and do not pose acoustic problems. Since the last inspection, the school has built a medical room which provides appropriate facilities for pupils who become ill.

Due to the constraints of the building, the provision of an outdoor playing area has not been met since the last inspection and still does not meet requirements. There is no playground, apart from a small area for young pupils. The school is located near to the town centre and so there has been almost no opportunity to make suitable arrangements to provide safe outdoor play. Because of that obvious constraint, the school has created additional opportunities, for instance, by visits to the local park and by other outings as well as the provision of an indoor sports hall. The school and its governors are mindful of this and a number of possibilities are being considered in forward strategic planning.

Provision of information

The school communicates with its parents via letter, email, phone contact and within a comprehensive website. An annual written report to parents records pupils' progress made in both skills and subjects and includes effort grades. Parents spoken with said they were very happy about the way the school kept them informed and included them. All the regulations are met with regard to the provision of information. .

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets all regulations. It is detailed and carefully explains the stages of making a complaint. At the same time the policy aims to resolve differences informally where possible.

The school received two written complaints during the previous year. One complaint has been satisfactorily resolved. The other remained open and the young person is not longer a pupil at the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the two EYFS pupils in the Reception class is good. The curriculum provided has been carefully planned to ensure that all the required areas of learning are covered and that there is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Planning is thorough and assessments are meticulously recorded against the Early Years Profile to ensure both pupils make good progress. Because the class is very small, lessons are often helpfully conducted with pupils in Year 1 and Year 2. This arrangement lets the younger pupils benefit from being in a larger group, but staff manage this well and still focus very clearly on the needs of the youngest.

Pupils are very well cared for. Welfare requirements have been carefully considered and are fully implemented. Pupils have very happy and positive relationships with each other and with school staff. Staff work effectively to help pupils be aware of the need to stay healthy and safe. One result is that pupils are good at clearing up after themselves. The Sunshine Room and the Rainbow Room are well-equipped, interesting, welcoming and secure, allowing the pupils to thrive. The rather tortuous route through the lower ground floor to these rooms in the EYFS unit, has been considerably improved since the last inspection. The school recognises it could be developed further and plans to decorate the approach to make it more attractive and exciting for young pupils.

Teaching is consistently good with lessons conducted at a brisk pace with a wide variety of well chosen activities. For example, a numeracy lesson introducing the idea of subtraction involved playing skittles, singing number rhymes and taking on the roles of being at the vets with animals which were sent home as they recovered. This was good fun. The pupils were engaged, well motivated and made good progress. During the inspection, the weekly visit of the local Police Community Support Officer was an obvious highlight. Pupils watched and listened to advice about being safe, and the message was reinforced when they took great delight in

having their photograph taken in police uniform. Outdoor activities take place whatever the weather and include a wide range of trips to local parks, farms and shops, deliberately planned by staff to compensate for the limitations of the tiny outdoor play area at the school. Pupils' learning is carefully monitored and they make good progress particularly in their personal, social and emotional skills and in basic numeracy and literacy. Teachers are gifted, highly experienced, well qualified and work together as a very effective team who have implemented the EYFS well and the provision is well managed.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets all but two of the regulations for registration. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (This regulation is now part of the Equality Act 2010.)

In order to meet fully the regulations in **part 1**, quality of education provided, the school must:

- develop plans to improve the current assessment system so that the school can be sure that all pupils are enabled to make good progress. (Regulation 3(g))

In order to meet fully the regulations in **part 5**, premises of and accommodation at schools, the school must:

- continue to investigate ways of providing an outdoor play area (Regulation 23(s))

Meeting the expectations of CST

The school's religious ethos broadly meets the expectations of CST but in order to strengthen its religious ethos the school should consider:

- re-discovering its original vision of a Christ-centred curriculum, where the Christian faith is integral, not added on
- continuing to develop its policies and procedures so they articulate their Christian roots more clearly
- making every effort to promote the school in other churches in the area in order to increase the proportion of Christian families and re-build a Christian culture amongst the senior pupils as well as the juniors.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- building on its careers guidance, and its current plans for improving the effectiveness of assessment, to ensure that pupils in Key Stage 4 benefit from regular and thorough academic reviews

- sharing good practice in teaching so that more lessons are good
- giving pupils more opportunities to make their views known and take on responsibilities
- adding to the anti-bullying policy and the recording of incidents so that it is clear how matters have been resolved.