

School inspection report

31 October 2023 to 2 November 2023

Maranatha Christian School

Queenlaines Farm
Sevenhampton
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN6 7SQ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as ‘the Standards’.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The trustees, who form the proprietorial board, bring appropriate skills and experience to their role. They keep themselves informed about the wellbeing of pupils. In doing so, they provide support and challenge to school leaders and ensure the requirements of the Standards are consistently met.
2. Leaders plan a curriculum that is mainly based upon the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme. Pupils follow a personalised programme of study, which includes additional elements drawn from the National Curriculum. In the younger year groups, this curriculum enables pupils to work with increasing confidence and independence. Staff in the primary school deliver well-planned lessons, making effective use of targeted questioning to develop pupils understanding. Pupils' learning needs are met effectively, and pupils make good progress.
3. In the senior school, planned activities do not always take into account pupils' prior learning. This can be seen where the curriculum for older pupils is adapted to meet the requirements for IGCSE examinations. When this happens, pupils do not progress as consistently and their results in IGCSE examinations sometimes fall below their predicted grades.
4. Leaders recognise the need to provide additional training for teachers to support the delivery of the senior school curriculum following the transition to IGCSE so that pupils progress is more consistent.
5. In the primary school and in the early years, teachers provide suitable support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and plan activities which are matched to their needs. Provision to support senior pupils who have SEND has recently been revised, but it is too soon to judge its impact.
6. An assessment framework is in place for the core areas of learning such as numeracy, literacy and science. In other subjects, assessment arrangements are less well developed and do not always support pupils' consistent progress or inform subject choices.
7. In the early years, children make good progress because activities are well matched to the interest and needs of the children. Adults model kind and considerate behaviour and children learn to co-operate with each other and to treat others with respect.
8. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress with their proficiency in English because staff provide targeted support.
9. Leaders provide trained staff to support pupils' mental health. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is delivered effectively. Leaders successfully promote highly positive relationships, which enhance pupils' personal development and self-esteem. Pupils are self-aware and highly respectful of others.
10. There are suitable processes in place to ensure the welfare of pupils. Pupils are well supervised, and the site is maintained to a safe standard.
11. The school's Christian ethos is evident in pupils' growing spiritual development and commitment to serve their school and the wider community. They are prepared for life after they leave school.
12. Leaders create an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff and trustees undertake regular safeguarding training and have a secure understanding of appropriate safeguarding

procedures. There are well-established systems in place to report and track any concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders respond promptly to these concerns.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that all teaching builds on pupils' prior learning so that senior pupils make consistently good progress towards IGCSE examinations
- provide suitable training for teachers to support recent changes to the curriculum
- ensure the recent changes to provide additional support to pupils who have SEND in the senior school enable them to make consistent progress
- strengthen the assessment framework to monitor pupil progress more closely in all subjects and support informed subject choices for IGCSE.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. The trustees monitor the school's procedures and maintain an oversight of how leaders fulfil their responsibilities. They are actively involved in determining school priorities and have relevant skills and expertise which they utilise to support the school. Both trustees and leaders ensure the education provided is in line with the school's Christian ethos. Leaders successfully implement their vision for pupils to be caring, thoughtful and tolerant. They know their pupils well and promote their wellbeing.
14. Trustees and leaders have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their self-evaluation process has resulted in a clear development plan. In delivering this plan, they have taken actions to improve provision. For example, a review of the primary school curriculum led to changes that have a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.
15. In other respects, however, such as restructuring the curriculum and providing additional training for staff to prepare senior pupils for IGCSE examinations, leaders have identified the issues, and are in the process of addressing them. Additional support has been provided for pupils who have SEND in the senior school, but this is too recent to evaluate.
16. Staff in the early years work together to ensure that children settle in quickly. Children enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and happy. They make good progress during their time in the setting because leaders ensure that activities are well matched to their interests and needs.
17. Leaders at all levels fulfil their duties under the Equality Act 2010. This can be seen in adjustments made to meet the individual needs of pupils who have SEND. The school endorses principles of equality through the respectful and fair treatment of pupils.
18. Leaders maintain a close partnership with parents and provide them with all the required information. There is a suitable complaints procedure which is implemented effectively. Leaders and staff are readily available to parents and deal with any concerns promptly.
19. There is a systematic and effective approach to the management of different types of risk. Suitable risk assessments, including for the school site, trips, activities, health and allergy concerns, promote the safety and wellbeing of pupils. Procedures are well understood by staff and processes are robust.
20. Leaders have established links with external agencies, such as organisations that provide independent assessment and therapy services for pupils, helping staff to meet the diverse needs of the pupil body. These agencies provide additional resources, expertise and support to the school staff to help promote the wellbeing of pupils.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders base the curriculum on the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme. This aligns with the school's Christian ethos and seeks for each pupil to build their knowledge logically and at their own pace. Pupils undertake many learning activities independently, with support from teachers. As a result, pupils throughout the school develop effective independent learning skills.
22. Leaders have identified limitations to the ACE curriculum and recognise the need to provide additional activities to increase pupils' knowledge and skills in a wider range of subjects. In the primary school, planning has been adapted effectively to give pupils further opportunities, such as to write at length about their learning, ensuring they have suitable physical education and providing more creative learning opportunities. Pupils show high levels of creativity in subjects such as art.
23. In the senior school, pupils are prepared for IGCSE examinations. Some results are below predictions based upon their starting points. Leaders recognise that the recent change in the examination curriculum is not aligned to provide a smooth transition and build on pupils' prior learning under the ACE programme. Progress is less consistent as a result. Steps have been taken to address this issue, but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.
24. A well-planned early years curriculum contributes to children's good progress from their starting points. Leaders make sure the activities set are closely linked to the desired learning outcomes. Staff have high expectations for children's behaviour. Children are engaged in their learning and develop effective concentration and listening skills. Staff successfully make the most of the opportunities to engage with the children, guide their learning and use effective questioning to develop their vocabulary.
25. Appropriate provision is made for pupils who have SEND. Pupils make good progress, particularly in the primary school. Support for senior pupils is adequate. Leaders have recently provided additional support, but it is too soon to evaluate the outcomes. Individual support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is effective so that they generally make good progress.
26. Leaders have ensured that teaching in the primary school is effective. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use a range of well-planned activities to promote pupils' good progress. Senior school staff have undertaken some training to deliver the new senior curriculum, in particular in the preparation required for IGCSE examinations. Leaders recognise that more training and support is required, and this is being implemented.
27. A framework to assess pupils' performance is in place. In the early years and core academic subjects there is an effective and systematic approach. This helps to enhance progress and ensure the teaching is planned to meet the needs of pupils. Assessment strategies are less well developed in other subjects, which means that progress is less consistent, and pupils do not always have enough information to help guide subject choices at IGCSE.
28. Teachers give individual focused feedback in most lessons, which pupils find reassuring and constructive, and they find detailed marking, when provided, helps them to improve.
29. Leaders provide pupils with the opportunity to undertake a varied range of activities and develop new skills through a programme of trips, visits and after-school clubs. However, limited numbers of

pupils choose to be involved. Leaders recognise this and are looking at ways to improve the situation.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

30. Leaders promote high levels of independence, mutual respect and self-knowledge in pupils in line with the school's stated aims. Pupils feel that 'the school lets you be you and they don't judge'. In the early years, children become increasingly confident as they are encouraged to select their own activities and explore their classroom environment. Leaders celebrate pupils' achievements in assemblies, rewarding examples of qualities such as compassion. This builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
31. Pupils develop their spirituality through a well-planned religious studies (RS) curriculum. Pupils develop their understanding of Christianity and are encouraged to live their lives through its values and teachings. Leaders also ensure that pupils learn to understand and respect other religions.
32. Leaders provide a suitable PSHE programme, which includes appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils are well informed about aspects such as consent and the features of a healthy relationship.
33. The physical development of children in the early years is nurtured by opportunities to explore and play outdoors. Children are encouraged to express their feelings and staff guide them into making appropriate behavioural choices. Children's fine motor skills are also well developed; they were observed using craft materials with ease to produce lanterns. The early years staff promote a healthy and encouraging environment in which children develop an understanding of and respect for each other. Children interact well with each other and positively with adults, and acts of kindness are recognised and celebrated.
34. Leaders' emphasis on mutual respect is evident in all aspects of school life. As a result, pupils show care and consideration for others. Pupils mix with ease across the year groups during recreational times and communicate confidently with adults.
35. Leaders successfully promote positive behaviour and pupils behave well. Teaching across the school, including in the early years, consistently endorses positive behaviour through the effective use of classroom rules and rewards. Pupils are polite and courteous, listening to each other's views and opinions during reflective discussions. Should bullying occur, it is dealt with quickly.
36. Leaders have ensured that there is a team of staff who provide effective emotional support to pupils, promoting their mental health and wellbeing. Pupils are positive in their interactions with their peers and staff and will readily approach staff if they need help. Older pupils' physical wellbeing is supported by regular sport and physical education lessons.
37. Pupils are effectively supervised across the site and clear protocols to maintain their safety, are well-established and understood by all. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation are maintained suitably. There are effective systems for health and safety and fire safety. The school's provision for first aid is adequate. There are trained staff and pupils know who they can go to if they are hurt or unwell.
38. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored. Leaders monitor attendance effectively and are quick to follow up any absence. There are effective systems and procedures for passing on the required records and confirming destinations for pupils who leave the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

39. Leaders ensure that pupils are suitably prepared for life beyond school, and they understand the need to make a positive contribution to wider society. Pupils also recognise the need to contribute to the wellbeing of the world they inhabit, for example, clearly articulating how it is essential to raise awareness about recycling.
40. Children in the early years learn how to play amicably together, as staff explain the importance of kindness, sharing and listening to those around them. As they grow older, pupils learn there are views and values that differ from their own, and the importance of tolerance and understanding for others. Pupils show acceptance and respect for those with beliefs different to their own.
41. Leaders help pupils to prepare for later life as they learn to understand the importance of democracy. They understand that the views of others must be heard. Pupils develop an adequate financial and economic understanding through curricular activities in subjects such as mathematics, and enterprise activities. They learn about world faiths and cultures through RE lessons, assemblies and diverse cultural celebrations.
42. Leaders and staff ensure pupils understand the importance of diversity and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and debate moral issues. Staff use picture books effectively to develop younger children's moral understanding. They engage in conversations with pupils regarding ethical situations, successfully helping pupils to develop empathy and compassion. Older pupils develop a clear understanding of the importance of laws, rules and rights through activities such as 'global perspectives' lessons, where they explore the definitions and interpretations of 'law' and 'crime' in different countries.
43. The school offers an adequate careers programme, which is effective in helping pupils to prepare for the next stage of their lives. Many undertake work experience placements, often with charitable organisations, to support their understanding of the workplace and possible career options.
44. Pupils contribute to society through a range of initiatives in the school and wider community. Pupils readily take on small roles of service within the community. Leaders have created a focus on social and economic wellbeing, which provides pupils with opportunities to engage in enterprise and charitable endeavours. Pupils willingly give their time to support a variety of charities.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Leaders and trustees ensure that safeguarding is effective and in line with current statutory guidance. Safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, understood and implemented by staff. Staff are alert to safeguarding issues that may arise.
46. When safeguarding concerns arise, the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) liaises with relevant external agencies as appropriate. Training for staff is effective, and there is a real sense that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Records of concerns are kept securely and monitored and updated appropriately.
47. Leaders recognise contextual safeguarding risks and take effective action to mitigate them. Online safety has been a recent focus, and leaders have provided additional online safety lessons and enhanced the internet filtering and monitoring systems.
48. Procedures for the recruitment of staff are thorough and in line with statutory requirements. The school conducts all required recruitment checks and records these on a single central record of appointments. Trustees with responsibility in this area have appropriate experience and training, and the board conducts an annual review of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Maranatha Christian School
Department for Education number	866/6001
Registered charity number	1092273
Address	Maranatha Christian School Sevenhampton Queenlaines Farm Swindon SN6 7SQ
email	reception@maranathaschool.org
Website	maranathaschool.org
Proprietor	New Maranatha Christian School Trust
Chair	Mrs Lara Morava
Headteacher	Mr Tom Price
Age range	3 to 17
Number of pupils	73
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2019

Information about the school

49. Maranatha Christian School is an independent, co-educational day school. Located near Swindon, it was opened in 1991 and is located in buildings adjacent to the site of a working farm.
50. The school is a registered charity and is owned by the New Maranatha Christian School Trust, whose trustees form its governing body. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2020.
51. The school has an early years setting for children aged between three and five.
52. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
53. English is an additional language for four pupils.
54. The school states that its aims are to provide a loving Christian environment where pupils can achieve academic and vocational excellence. It aims to help pupils become caring, thoughtful, tolerant, and loving Christian young people who recognise their role in society and their need to contribute to the wellbeing of the world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 31 October to 2 November 2023

55. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
56. Inspection activities included:
- visiting all areas of the school including the early years
 - observing lessons, assembly and registration sessions
 - discussions with pupils from a range of year groups
 - scrutinising a range of curriculum and other documentation made available by the school
 - discussions with members of staff, senior leaders and trustees including the chair
 - reviewing and discussing samples of pupils' work alongside pupils and staff
57. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit www.isi.net.

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