

Inspection of The Vine Christian School

Mitford Close, Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, Berkshire RG7 1HF

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils learn well at The Vine. They come promptly to school and work hard in their lessons, rising to meet adults' high expectations. Routines established in the early years help pupils to flourish as they move through the school. Pupils make positive choices about their learning and behaviour. The school is a calm and purposeful place to be.

Adults know pupils well and are determined to meet their needs. Leaders have rectified historic weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well supported by the adults around them. Nurturing relationships are evident throughout. Pupils' attendance is high.

Pupils are prepared well for life beyond the school and the community in which it is based. They demonstrate the school's Christian values through their thoughtful conduct. They are kind and respectful to one another and to the adults who help them. They rarely need prompting to make the right choices about how to behave.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders' determined hard work has brought about much-needed improvements to the school since the last inspection. Their focus on establishing a culture of safeguarding has been relentless. However, leaders have not lost sight of the need to sustain and improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. What and how they learn builds deliberately from the early years to the sixth form. Pupils study a broad range of subjects that prepare them well for future work and/or learning. This range of subjects is sustained to the end of Year 11. Teachers adapt and add to the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum that the school has adopted, for example, to ensure that pupils get sufficient opportunities to write at length about their learning. Pupils respond well to how their learning is structured, developing secure knowledge about the subjects that they study. This equips them suitably for sixth-form study, either at The Vine or elsewhere, or for other career paths, such as apprenticeships.

Teachers demonstrate strong knowledge across the range of subjects that they teach. They use assessment seamlessly to identify gaps in pupils' emerging knowledge. As a result, they act swiftly if pupils start to fall behind, helping them to catch up. Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective because teachers identify and address these needs promptly.

Reading is taught effectively. Starting in the nursery, children begin learning the basic letter sounds. As they move towards Year 1, their knowledge of phonics grows systematically. Children enjoy listening to and joining in with stories. They practise applying their phonics knowledge by reading books that are matched with the

sounds that they know. Almost all are accurate readers by the time they move to Year 1.

Older pupils read fluently, interpreting what they read with increasing sophistication. However, the curriculum for pupils in the secondary phase incorporates a relatively narrow range of texts. Consequently, pupils are not introduced to a wide range of genres and authors as part of their learning. Leaders are beginning to develop a school library, to help encourage pupils to read more widely. There is more work to do to foster pupils' love of reading through deliberately encountering a broader range of texts.

Pupils' personal development is a strong aspect of the school's work. The school's Christian ethos is reflected in pupils' learning across the curriculum. Children in the early years learn how to play kindly together. As they get older, pupils learn more about views and values that differ from their own, developing their tolerance and respect for others. Leaders ensure that personal, social and health education informs pupils about relevant issues, such as diversity, extremism and online safety. Opportunities for pupils to reflect and debate moral issues with their teachers and the church pastor are built into the curriculum. Learning about relationships and sex education is suitably informative and respectful of pupils' beliefs.

Careers information, advice and guidance are evolving as the number of older pupils on roll increases. Leaders use relevant guidance to shape pupils' learning about a suitably broad range of post-16 opportunities. These include the school's sixth form, other sixth-form provision and apprenticeship routes. Leaders are keen to further develop opportunities for pupils to speak to people who work in a range of jobs, and to establish routine work experience for students in the sixth form.

Leadership training has been a focus since the last inspection. Those responsible for safeguarding, early years and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) now have deeper knowledge that has strengthened the quality of their work. For example, the requirements of the early years foundation stage are now both understood and met. The needs of pupils with SEND are identified and addressed sufficiently, enabling them to learn well. Safeguarding duties are understood clearly.

Governance has been subject to turbulence since the last inspection, with some recent changes of personnel. Currently, governors and trustees take joint responsibility for overseeing standards in the school. Their work is supported well by the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. These plans enable those responsible for governance to check that the independent school standards are met. They challenge leaders sufficiently about the school's improvement priorities, particularly in relation to safeguarding but also considering other relevant aspects of provision. The headteacher, governors and trustees sensibly access support from beyond the school to help them check that they are fulfilling their legal duties and making accurate judgements about standards in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Addressing historical weaknesses has been leaders' absolute priority since the last inspection. Ongoing and high-quality training has strengthened staff, leaders, governors and trustees' knowledge considerably. Appropriate systems are in place to check, not just assume, that everyone thoroughly understands their safeguarding duties.

A culture of vigilance now exists in the school. Pupils are safe and feel safe. They describe feeling confident that adults would listen to any concerns they might have. They also know how to access support from beyond the school if they prefer.

Adults understand the importance of passing on any concerns they may have about a pupil, no matter how small. The designated safeguarding lead has an accurate view of pupils who may be vulnerable. She sensibly seeks advice from other experts, such as via the local authority, when deciding what action she may need to take to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils access a limited range of texts and genres as part of their planned curriculum. Planned opportunities to read for pleasure diminish as pupils get older. Consequently, chances to foster pupils' love of reading and develop their wider knowledge are missed. Leaders should ensure that pupils throughout the school routinely and deliberately engage with books written by a broad range of authors.
- Careers information, advice and guidance for pupils in the secondary phase of the school are in the relatively early stages of development, as the number of secondary-aged pupils in the school increases. While pupils access age-appropriate and impartial advice to support their future planning, their opportunities to talk to a wide range of people with experience of different careers are limited. Leaders should ensure that pupils have planned opportunities to learn about a broad range of post-16 options through engaging with experts from beyond the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	134424
DfE registration number	872/6013
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10202286
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	The trustees of The Vine Christian School
Chair	Babu Samuel
Headteacher	René Esterhuizen
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,250 to £5,475
Telephone number	01189 886 464
Website	www.vinechristianschool.org.uk
Email address	office@thevcs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 June 2019

Information about this school

- The Vine Christian School is a small, independent day school. It accommodates pupils aged three to 18 years. There are currently 26 pupils on roll, including one in the sixth form and 10 in the early years.
- The school has a Christian ethos that guides its work. It is part of the Christian Education Europe (CEE) network of schools. Pupils follow the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum produced by the CEE. During Years 1 to 11, the curriculum is based around six core subjects: English, mathematics, science, social studies, literature and word building. All pupils also study the Bible. Pupils then access a range of other subjects through studying 'electives', such as auto mechanics, music and languages. In the sixth form, students specialise in a narrower range of subjects.
- The school is based in the building of the Three Mile Cross Church. The building is used exclusively by the school during the week. Aside from the school building, there is a space outside where pupils can play safely.
- There is a small nursery that takes children from the age of three. Some of these children attend part time.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. Two children in the primary phase attend school part time but have all of their education provided by the school.
- The school is governed by the trustees of The Vine Christian School. At the start of this inspection, only one trustee was in post, with another having recently resigned. There is also a governing body in place, consisting of trustees, the church pastor and representatives not connected to the church. Currently, the trustees and governors work together and take collective responsibility for the governance of the school.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2019, shortly after the last standard inspection, when the school was judged to be inadequate. A progress monitoring inspection took place in October 2020. A number of independent school standards remained unmet at the time of that inspection.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and early years manager. They spoke to all members of staff and to pupils during visits to lessons. The lead inspector also spoke to two governors and one of the trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: Early reading, mathematics, science and geography. This involved speaking to leaders, visiting lessons, looking at work and talking to teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school’s safeguarding arrangements. This included reviewing the single central register of recruitment checks on staff, and arrangements for staff and governance training. Relevant policies and records were also taken into account.
- The lead inspector toured the school site to gather evidence about compliance with the independent school standards. She also reviewed a range of other relevant policies and documents provided by the school or available via the website.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and spoke to parents and carers at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Yasmin Maskatiya

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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