

Inspection of Bethany School

Finlay Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S3 7PS

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The bond between Bethany School and its families is very special. Throughout school, the values of respect, inclusivity and kindness are underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. The school's approach to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is of a very high quality.

Pupils behave very well in and out of class. They go about their daily routine without any fuss. Pupils get on well with each other. They listen to each other and value the opinions of others. They support each other to make the right choices. Pupils are polite and considerate with adults, including the extensive number of parent and carer volunteers.

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum to ensure that pupils are taught a broad range of subjects and topics. The breadth of the curriculum helps pupils to reach appropriate destinations at the end of Year 11. Sometimes, the implementation of the curriculum does not ensure that all pupils are appropriately supported and challenged.

Bullying and incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils know which adults to speak to if incidents occur. Pupils feel safe at the school.

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

Leaders ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are consistently met. They ensure that the premises are well maintained. Leaders are not complacent about safeguarding. For example, they have recently added a new lock to the external school gate to help keep pupils safe. All school policies are published online. The school's website is well maintained, and all necessary information is accessible to parents and carers.

The school's curriculum is broad. Pupils in all classes study an appropriate range of subjects. Some subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, are taught individually. Other subjects, including art, geography and history, are captured in a series of nine wider topics. These topics are closely linked to early chapters from the Bible. Curriculum plans outline the skills and knowledge that staff expect pupils to learn both in subjects and in topics.

The early years curriculum is well planned. The Reception classroom and outdoor areas are well designed and have been organised to complement the curriculum. The activities in each area of learning are engaging and changed regularly. Every area has a 'challenge task' that adults use to help continually assess each child's development. Adults make the most of the opportunities available to develop children's vocabulary.

Pupils learn to read from an early age. Teachers use a phonics scheme to help guide the early reading curriculum. Staff ensure that the books pupils read match the

sounds they are learning. Some adults have not had recent training on the school's current phonics scheme. In addition, leaders do not have up-to-date information about how well pupils are learning phonics. These factors restrict the impact of this scheme.

Pupils are taught in mixed-ability classes, often with pupils from other year groups. Much of curriculum has been designed to accommodate this. Sometimes, the way in which the curriculum is taught means that some pupils' individual needs are not met as well as they could be. This is particularly the case in key stage 3 and key stage 4 classes. Some pupils who have grasped concepts quickly are not provided with opportunities to deepen their understanding of a new topic. Equally, other pupils who need additional time to grasp a concept do not consistently receive work that they can access.

A well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is in place. Teachers teach it well. In addition to the school's focus on Christianity, pupils learn about other faith and beliefs. Pupils are taught to respect others and to appreciate the diversity of life in modern Britain. They learn about the importance of healthy relationships. They know the importance of not discriminating against anyone because of the protected characteristics. Older pupils learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and how to look after their own physical and mental health. Older pupils also receive independent, impartial careers advice. They are supported to go on to a range of colleges and sixth forms at the end of Year 11.

The art curriculum has a high profile. Leaders have thought carefully about the important skills and knowledge pupils need in order to become accomplished artists. Pupils' artwork is displayed and celebrated throughout school. Throughout all key stages, much of this work is of a high quality.

To support the school's engagement with the community, pupils, staff and family members gather every week for 'family afternoon'. An exciting series of activities takes place each week to help bring the community together. Some pupils would like more of the sessions to focus on their own talents and interests. Many parents provide support in lessons. This is a fundamental part of the school's structure. These adults know pupils and the school very well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by a large team of parent volunteers. Staff know the needs of these pupils well. Pupils receive interventions and other help to support their needs. However, the targets in place for these pupils often lack detail. Leaders do not consistently check the progress that pupils with SEND are making towards their targets.

Members of the proprietorial board (known locally as the board of governors) are fully committed to the school. They bring a wealth of experience and appropriate skills to the school. They meet monthly and visit the school between meetings. The board offers both support and challenge to school leaders. They regularly evaluate the school against the standards. They ensure that the school fulfils the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage. Recently, the board has supported

leaders to implement statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education. It also ensures that the school meets schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, such as through the design and implementation of an appropriate accessibility plan.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that the necessary pre-employment checks are made on all staff working at the school. Appropriate checks are also made on all volunteers who support pupils. Staff and volunteers receive regular safeguarding training.

Pupils are made to feel safe and valued. In every classroom, there are notices outlining precisely to whom pupils can speak if they need help. A worry box is also used for pupils to communicate their concerns. The curriculum is also used to help pupils stay safe, such as by teaching pupils how to stay safe when online.

Leaders work well with external agencies to help pupils and families who need extra support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some adults do not receive regular training on aspects of the school's curriculum, including the school's phonics scheme. This means that there is an inconsistent approach to some of the support that adults provide. Leaders should ensure that all staff, including adults supporting pupils in lessons, receive regular, subject-specific training.
- Some of the work given to older pupils who are taught in mixed-ability and mixed-aged classes does not meet their individual needs. This includes some pupils who grasp topics quickly, as well as others who take longer to understand new concepts. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders should ensure that the needs of individual pupils are taken into account when delivering the planned curriculum.
- The individual targets in place for some pupils with SEND are not accurately matched with their needs. The progress that some pupils make towards these targets is not checked regularly enough by leaders. As a result, the impact of the support provided to these pupils is limited. Leaders should ensure that the targets for pupils with SEND accurately match their needs and then regularly check the progress made towards these targets.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	107168
DfE registration number	373/6027
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10254637
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Christian Family Schools Ltd
Chair	Benjamin Chinedu Udejiofo
Headteacher	David Charles
Annual fees (day pupils)	No fixed fees
Telephone number	0114 272 6994
Website	www.bethanyschoolsheffield.org
Email address	office@bethanyschoolsheffield.org
Date of previous inspection	2 to 4 October 2018

Information about this school

- Bethany School is a Christian independent day school for pupils aged four to 16 years. The school has an open admissions policy and admits children from all faiths.
- Bethany School is the sole school in Christian Family Schools Ltd.
- There is no set fee for parents to pay. Parents make a financial contribution based on what they can afford. The school expects parents to contribute fully to school life and their child's education. Many parents are volunteers at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher has changed since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up his post in summer 2021.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and design, and PSHE education. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans, talked to pupils about their work, visited lessons and spoke to staff. Inspectors also reviewed the early years curriculum.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector had a tour of the school site to check compliance with the independent school standards for premises.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the proprietor board and held a telephone call with a representative from Sheffield local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation and policies relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. Inspectors reviewed the school's records of behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also spoke to pupils from most classes to gather their views on the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff, pupils and parents who responded to Ofsted's inspection surveys.

Inspection team

James Duncan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Stephenson

His Majesty's Inspector

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