

Paragon Christian Academy

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	204/6389
Unique Reference Number	100301
Inspection number	296857
Inspection dates	7-8 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Florence Olajide AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Paragon Christian Academy is an independent, co-educational, day school for pupils aged 4 to 18 years. It is located in Clapton, in the London borough of Hackney. The school, which was founded in 1992, has a distinctive Christian ethos. The school is a registered charity and the trustees are the World Vision for Christ. Its stated main objective is to incorporate the teaching of holy scripture into every aspect of children's education to enable them to grow spiritually, physically and academically. The school offers the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum, which is a highly structured and individualised programme of learning, to pupils up to the age of 13. Older pupils continue their education at the school up to the age of 18 by following the European Academy for Christian Home Schooling programme. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and many of them speak English as an additional language.

Evaluation of the school

Paragon Christian Academy provides pupils with a good education. The high quality of teaching and assessment enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well spiritually, academically and personally. In this regard, the school successfully achieves its stated aim. The overall quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Nonetheless, there are a number of deficiencies in the procedures and policies, which the school relies on to safeguard pupils' well-being.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and it meets the needs of all pupils. Parents are rightly complimentary about the school's provision and the impact that it has on their children's academic and personal development.

Pupils follow structured units of learning called PACES in a sequential order. PACES become progressively more demanding as pupils progress through the curriculum. The core curriculum consists of mathematics, English, word building, social studies, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Careers education, history and geography are covered within the social

studies PACES. Additional subjects such as creative writing, art, music and physical education (PE) further enrich the curriculum. Pupils also have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including ice-skating, drama, swimming and dance. Older pupils can choose 'electives' from among an extensive list of options that include modern foreign languages, Biblical studies, nutritional science, business studies, typing, accounting, business mathematics, photography and web site design. Pupils receive specialist teaching in music and many learn to play a range of musical instruments. Pupils follow the PACES in the mornings, while afternoon sessions are generally used to teach the extended curriculum or to expand on concepts in the PACES, in a more interactive manner. The school provides an appropriate personal, social and health education programme, which makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

The quality of teaching and assessment is also good. Teaching is particularly good in the lessons that follow the PACES structure. In these lessons, all expected routines and procedures are followed. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to learn each day and they work on their PACES in the correct sequence. They say they like the PACES because they 'help them to learn'. Teachers fill in star charts regularly and these give pupils constant visual feedback about the progress they are making in each subject. From the age of six, pupils take responsibility for their own learning and set their own personal daily goals. Goal charts show that pupils complete an appropriate amount of work each day and a number of reward systems motivate them to work at a faster pace. Teachers set daily goals for the youngest pupils based on their needs and abilities in the different subjects. These established procedures, together with half-termly assessments, ensure that pupils make good progress.

Even so, teaching tends to be weaker in lessons taught in the extended curriculum where, in an attempt to stimulate pupils' creativity, a more flexible approach is used. The main weakness in these lessons is that learning objectives are not clearly defined. This leads to the use of inappropriate teaching sequences, which do not build sufficiently on pupils' previous knowledge, therefore slowing their progress in these lessons.

The overall impact of the high quality provision is that pupils achieve well. Between the ages of 16 and 18, pupils achieve the National Christian School Certificate at Level 2 and Level 3, which are equivalent to General Certificate of Education AS and A2 levels. All pupils go on to further or higher education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The clear expectations set by the school are fully supported by parents, and pupils rise to these admirably. Pupils are assured, mature and well mannered. Parents are pleased that the strong moral values promoted by the school are expressed in their children's conduct at home. Pupils have a clear sense of right or wrong and their behaviour is good. Older pupils confidently express their views about the moral and secular issues that influence their faith. Pupils enjoy school as shown by their good attendance. They like the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They play well together, have good attitudes to learning and work diligently.

Pupils learn about different cultures through the curriculum and through their informal interactions with one another. Their contribution to the community is satisfactory. Older pupils take responsibility for looking after younger ones in a variety of roles such as prefects, monitors and youth leaders. Younger pupils also have duties around the school. However, although pupils are confident that they can take their views and ideas to staff for consideration, there are no formal mechanisms to enable them to participate in decision making on a regular basis. Some pupils have contributed to the wider community by raising funds for an orphanage in Nigeria. However, not all pupils have opportunities to make an equally good contribution. Older pupils are developing a satisfactory knowledge of British public institutions through the recently introduced citizenship lessons. The good standards achieved by pupils prepare them well for further education and the world of work.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Although the school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory, there are a number of shortcomings in the procedures and policies designed to minimise all health and safety risks to pupils. Staff have not had training on child protection matters and the school guidelines do not detail the procedures to be followed in the event that an allegation is made against a member of staff. Procedures for administering first aid are appropriate but staff do not have up-to-date qualifications. The school has now arranged for several staff to update their first aid qualifications later this term. Similarly, arrangements have been made to provide staff with training on child protection matters. The school carries out a range of risk assessments including those for educational trips and visits. However, the school does not give sufficient attention to some health and safety issues, for example, by carrying out checks on portable electrical appliances.

Nonetheless, the school's clear and consistent approach to discipline combined with a positive and caring atmosphere ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils say they like school because *'everyone gets treated equally'* and *'there's a fair amount of discipline'*. They and their parents are confident that there is no bullying in the school. As one parent explained, *'pupils have no fear or worries of bullies because the school does not allow it to happen'*. Pupils say that their teachers are *'easy to relate to'*. They are happy to talk to staff about any problems they might have, particularly the headteacher, whom they describe as having *'a bond'* with each one of them. The school promotes healthy lifestyles through PE, the timetabled *'fruit time'* and by encouraging pupils to bring healthy food options to school. Older pupils have access to, and often choose, subject options which include nutritional science and health.

The school maintains an admission register but the index is not kept in alphabetical order. Corrections to registers are made in a manner that obscures the original entry and staff do not all apply absence codes consistently. The school is aware of its responsibilities in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and is in the process of drafting a three-year accessibility plan.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school carries out all the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises consist of a converted church and an adjacent three-storey Victorian building. The old church hall is used as the main learning centre for older pupils of primary school age. In addition to teaching rooms, there is a music room and an ICT suite. The premises largely meet the school's needs, with some important exceptions. The school has an inadequate number of washrooms for staff and pupils and there are no appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill. In addition, the outdoor play space is too small and does not meet pupils' needs.

The premises are kept neat and tidy and in a satisfactory decorative state. Displays of pupils' work in some areas help to create an attractive learning environment. Teaching rooms are large enough and the furniture and fittings are appropriate for the different ages of pupils. As attempts to find accommodation that is more suitable have not been successful, the school is currently considering the possibility of rebuilding.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents with a good range of information through the prospectus and other documents in the admissions pack. Consequently, they feel that they are well informed and as one parent explained, '*The school's systems and standards are clear to, and appreciated by parents*'. They particularly like the regular updates that the school provides on pupils' progress. Parents have been informed that they may request a number of important policies and documents.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written complaints procedure that meets the requirements of the regulations. It had no formal written complaints in the preceding year, which reflects the very positive relationships between the school and parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- update the child protection policy to ensure that it complies with the DfES guidance '*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education*' (2007) and ensure that all staff receive appropriate training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).
- have regard to the DfES *guidance 'Health and safety: responsibilities and powers'* by attending to the health and safety issues identified in this report (paragraph 3(4)).
- ensure that a sufficient number of staff are appropriately qualified to administer first aid at all times (paragraph 3(6)).
- maintain the admission register and attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 by ensuring that the admission register index is kept in alphabetical order and that any corrections to registers are made in a manner which does not obscure the original entry (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).
- establish appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

School details

Name of school	Paragon Christian Academy		
DfES number	204/6389		
Unique reference number	100301		
Type of school	Faith School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	7 September 1992		
Age range of pupils	4 - 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 26	Girls: 26	Total: 52
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,232		
Address of school	233-241 Glyn Road London E5 0JP		
Telephone number	0208 985 1119		
Fax number	0208 553 9855		
Email address	paragonchristianacademy@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Jennifer Lynch		
Proprietor	World Vision for Christ		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Florence Olajide AI		
Dates of inspection	7-8 March 2007		