

Inspection of Christ's College

Pennywell Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 8PG

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They like the fact the school is small and that everybody knows one another. This means that bullying rarely happens. Pupils are very loyal to the staff. They feel safe and well looked after. Most pupils behave well, although some do not try hard enough in lessons. Most pupils are punctual, but a few are late to lessons. Most pupils follow the school's rules. A few pupils misbehave in classes taught by temporary teachers.

Although pupils enjoy school, most are not making the progress they should. This is because leaders have not planned the curriculum carefully enough. Children do not make a good enough start in the Reception classes. Some subjects get very little time in the primary phase. The quality of teaching is too variable across the school. Pupils' progress is too dependent on which teachers they get. Some teachers plan learning well, but others do not give enough time to topics. The curriculum does not do enough to build pupils' cultural knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always get the help they need.

Pupils want more trips to places of interest. They also want more extra-curricular clubs. The school's new leadership team has begun to sort out many of these problems.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has gone through a difficult period. Different academy trusts have wanted to sponsor the school. But some of these trusts have withdrawn their support before they have made any real difference. The Emmanuel Schools Foundation, in charge since May 2019, is showing more genuine commitment.

The result of uncertain leadership is that pupils are still not making the progress they should. The curriculum is not planned or delivered well. Curriculum plans vary in quality from subject to subject. Planning does not join up well between the primary and secondary phases. Subject plans do not set out the knowledge pupils should know. Little has been done to enrich the curriculum. For example, there are few trips to places of cultural interest. This means some topics are covered too superficially. Despite some quick changes made by senior leaders, the standard of teaching is still variable. Some teachers do not adapt the work they set for different classes. This means pupils find some work too hard or too easy.

In the primary phase, most teachers have the necessary skills to teach reading. Children learn phonics soon after joining the Reception Year. Adults listen to children read on most days. But pupils are not given suitable books to read. Sometimes their books include sounds they have not learned. This undermines their confidence. Teachers do not do enough to promote a love of reading. The books available in

some classrooms are uninspiring. Older pupils are not encouraged to read around the topics they study.

In the primary phase, leaders are focusing on improving standards in writing and mathematics. But this means some subjects, such as art and music, are getting squeezed out. Pupils' knowledge in these subjects is shallow. In the secondary phase, leaders have quickly introduced new courses, such as engineering and food studies. Leaders have given more time to French. They have begun to build a broader and more ambitious curriculum offer.

When the trust took over, provision for SEND was floundering. Leaders have done much in recent months to improve things. Pupils' needs are now assessed properly and there are good support plans in place. Parents are invited to get involved with reviewing their child's progress. However, teachers and teaching assistants need much more training. Some are not sure how to use the support plans and do not understand pupils' needs well enough. Some pupils with SEND are not getting the help they need.

Many of the changes leaders are making are at an early stage. They are doing a lot more to support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about safety, equal opportunities and faith in tutor periods and assemblies. More extra-curricular activities have been introduced. The primary sports funding is beginning to be used better to offer more events. There are more after-school clubs, although not many pupils are taking advantage of them. The quality of careers guidance needs developing. Last year, pupils did not get much careers information. Some older pupils are not clear about what to do when they leave school.

The quality of the curriculum in the early years requires improvement. Early years staff have gaps in their knowledge. They do not organise the teaching of reading, writing and number in an effective sequence. When children choose what to do for themselves, the activities provided do not always help them to develop their understanding. Teachers and other adults are not skilled enough at prompting children to think deeply. Children do not make the progress they should. The proportion who attain the expected standard at the end of the Reception Year is below average. Almost no children exceed the standards expected for their age.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The Emmanuel Schools Foundation has reviewed all aspects of safeguarding. Safeguarding is led by an experienced and knowledgeable senior leader. They make sure the safeguarding of pupils has a high priority. Signs around school and the weekly staff briefing ensure that staff are vigilant. Leaders make sure all adults who work in the school are carefully vetted. All members of staff have received training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety. Leaders know which pupils are more vulnerable and keep a watching eye on them. They work closely with the police and the local authority to protect pupils at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Oversight of the curriculum has been poor. The lack of a middle leadership structure means curriculum plans have developed in a piecemeal manner. Teachers have taken responsibility for writing curriculum plans for different phases of the school. Plans vary considerably in style and approach. This means that the curriculum is not an effective progression model. Senior leaders should establish an appropriate subject leadership structure. Once this is in place, curriculum planning should be reviewed. Plans within subjects should set out the knowledge that pupils should be taught across key stages 1 to 4. Content should be arranged in the best possible sequence. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively in the past. There are not enough opportunities woven into the curriculum to build pupils' cultural capital. More needs to be done to enrich the curriculum through the study of quality literature. A love of reading needs to be promoted and facilitated more effectively. Pupils need first-hand experience of places of interest, such as the theatre, museums and exhibitions.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Leaders have begun to introduce more teacher training. In primary, new materials have been introduced to support teachers' subject knowledge. In secondary, teachers are now getting support through a teacher training programme offered by the trust. Leaders should monitor the quality of teaching rigorously and provide additional support for teachers who are not performing at the standard expected. In particular, leaders need to check teachers provide work that is well matched to pupils' starting points.
- Some teachers and teaching assistants are unsure how to support pupils with SEND. Training for them is planned across this year. Leaders should check carefully whether this training makes a real difference in the classroom.
- Staff in the early years have gaps in their knowledge. They do not know enough about the characteristics of effective learning. Further training is needed from experienced early years practitioners. The early years curriculum needs to be more ambitious. Children need to make more progress in reading, writing and number.
- Many aspects of early reading teaching are sound. However, children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not given always books that match the sounds they know. Leaders must urgently review their books and make sure children can successfully read the books they are given.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138567
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10087561
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	533
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Duncan Woods
Principal	Julie Roberts
Website	www.christscollege.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2017

Information about this school

- Shortly after the last inspection, in 2017, the school was taken over by a new sponsor. Their involvement was short-lived. The sponsor withdrew later in the year. In 2018, there were interim leadership arrangements in place. The current sponsor, Emmanuel Schools Foundation, took over in May 2019. The principal and executive principal have been appointed from posts elsewhere in the trust.
- The school uses two alternative education providers. They are Returners and Sunderland College.
- The school has a Christian ethos.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school is registered to accept pupils from four to 18 years of age. Currently there are no students in the sixth form. School leaders intend to admit students to the sixth form again in the future.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met the principal, executive principal and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). We also met the trust’s chief executive and the chair of the school improvement board.
- We focused on the quality of the curriculum in reading, writing, English, science and modern foreign languages. We looked at these subjects across the full age range. We met the curriculum leaders for each subject, visited lessons, talked to pupils, looked at pupils’ workbooks and talked to teachers.
- We looked at other information about behaviour, attendance, extra-curricular activities and wider enrichment events.
- We looked at pupils’ punctuality, behaviour and conduct across the school day. The team held discussions with groups of pupils and listened to some younger pupils read. We also spoke to different members of staff, including a newly qualified teacher, office staff and housekeeping staff to gauge their views about how well pupils behave and conduct themselves. We also met some pupils who have received sanctions in the past.
- We looked at the vetting checks leaders make on adults who work in the school. We also talked to the leader in charge of staff safeguarding arrangements. We looked at records of the actions taken by leaders to protect pupils at risk. The team spoke to pupils to check how safe they felt. We also checked whether members of staff understand and abide by the school’s safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Dawn Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Crawshaw	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Warner	Ofsted Inspector

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