

Inspection of Carmel Christian School

817A Bath Road, Brislington, Bristol BS4 5NL

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 June 2021

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	No

What is it like to attend this school?

Children enjoy warm and caring relationships with one another and staff. However, leaders have not made sure that their safeguarding practices and procedures keep all children safe. Additional support from appropriate agencies is not sought when, from time to time, families require extra help.

Parents and carers describe the school as a welcoming and friendly place to be. They universally say that staff have created a caring environment for their children to learn and develop. Staff help children feel secure and confident.

The classroom is well resourced, and children have opportunities to explore and learn new things across all areas of learning. Staff take care to ensure that planned activities appeal to children's interests. Books are central to children's early experiences and are used well to enthuse children about their learning. Adults get the best from the children in their care.

Children happily and industriously go about their work and play. They respond well to adults' instructions and requests. Children's behaviour is very good, and they rise to the high expectations of them. Disagreements are rare and are always short-lived. A cheerful, positive atmosphere pervades.

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

The proprietorial board, governors and school leaders are not well informed about the requirements of the independent school standards (ISS). For instance, those responsible have not ensured that there are strong systems for dealing with concerns raised about children's safety and welfare. Members of the proprietorial body do not make a strong enough contribution to ensuring that safeguarding procedures are in line with what is required of schools. The new early years manager has not had leadership experience nor received sufficient training to help her in her role.

The proprietor has not ensured that standards relating to the welfare, health and safety are met fully. This means that some of the early years foundation stage welfare and safeguarding requirements are also not met. The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website but does not contain all the required information, such as guidance for staff on the use of mobile phones and cameras. Additionally, the procedures outlined in the school's policy are not implemented effectively. Leaders do not complete all the necessary checks on some governors before they start work at the school. Sometimes relevant checks are completed after staff take up their appointment. Leaders are not always clear about required staffing positions. For instance, there is no named deputy lead for the early years, as is required in the early years safeguarding and welfare requirements. New staff are reluctant to take on additional responsibilities, such as acting as a deputy designated safeguarding lead. This means that the early years manager carries extensive responsibilities with too little support.

Leaders have not thought carefully enough about the school's risk assessments. These are generic and not adapted to the children's needs or the physical setting. Risks were identified during the inspection, including a broken door lock in the early years classroom and an area that could be accessed by children that stored empty gas canisters. Leaders had not identified the potential risks of these hazards for themselves.

The curriculum provides for suitable and coherent learning opportunities. Staff make good use of the well-resourced classroom to make learning interesting. Since the appointment of the early years manager, children's experiences across all areas of learning have considerably strengthened. Staff benefit from the sharing of expertise and respond well to the support that they receive. Everyone's commitment to training and developing their skills underpins the recent improvements in the early years provision. Staff maintain detailed assessment records and document children's achievements carefully. Nevertheless, staff are not clear when to encourage children to extend their thinking or when to provide additional support by scaffolding children's learning more closely.

Children's acquisition of language is strongly promoted, and the teaching of early reading has an appropriate emphasis. Staff encourage children to enjoy books and stories from the very start. Themed activities linked to familiar stories such as 'The very hungry caterpillar' enthuse the youngest of learners. Older children read to adults often. Children achieve well, securely acquiring the language skills that they need in readiness for the challenges that lie ahead in key stage 1.

The youngest children gain a secure understanding of number and the number system. Nursery-aged children are able to count to 10 confidently and identify the numeral that matches the word. They can confidently order numbers. Adults promote children's independence well. For example, children enjoy the responsibility of making decisions about how to approach tasks, for example when choosing which items to collect when making the number eight. This approach taps into children's enthusiasm and encourages independent choice making.

Children respond well to adults and welcome interaction, including moments of praise. Most are competent at sharing and taking turns, showing a growing awareness of one another's needs and feelings. Disagreement between children is rare. They are enthusiastic and enjoy the activities on offer. Children listen well to adults and to one another. Very occasionally, when they lose focus or become distracted, staff are adept at settling children back to task. Children's personal development is promoted well. Critical thinking sessions support children's tolerance and build their confidence when speaking in front of their peers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not made it clear who staff refer on to when they have concerns about a child. Sometimes concerns bypass the school's designated safeguarding lead and are reported directly to members of the proprietor body. There is no clear process and concerns are not logged or tracked in the necessary detail. Pertinent information is not shared with the appropriate agencies. Inspection evidence shows that the school has not passed on serious concerns to the local authority safeguarding team, as is required.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Assessment practice is still developing. In interactions, adults need to recognise more clearly when children need to move on in their learning. Staff need to make better use of assessment in order to determine children's next steps and use every opportunity to cement their learning.
- Senior leaders do not make all of the necessary recruitment checks prior to staff and governors taking up appointment. They have not maintained accurate records of their recruitment checks. Leaders must ensure that their recruitment procedures comply with the latest national guidance.
- Leaders' safeguarding record-keeping is not systematic or organised in a chronological way. On occasions, leaders have not accurately identified possible safeguarding concerns to which pupils may be subject or reported them on to the relevant agencies promptly. Leaders must ensure that there is a systematic approach to safeguarding recording and reporting and that the appropriate routes are followed.
- Leaders' risk assessments are not tailored to the setting or to children's needs. This means that risks are not managed well enough. Leaders need to ensure that any risks to children are precisely identified and, where appropriate, mitigated against.
- Leadership capacity is weak, and responsibilities are not shared widely enough. For instance, the school has not ensured that there is a named deputy early years manager to take charge in the manager's absence. Leaders need to develop leadership capacity urgently so that the ISS are met consistently.

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

School details

Unique reference number	132774
DfE registration number	801/6021
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	10143828
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	Carmel Ministries International
Chair	Gerrit di Somma
Headteacher	Joanne Collins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4.00 per hour or £300 per month
Telephone number	01179 775 5678
Website	www.carmelchristianschool.org
Email address	jcollins@carmelchristianschool.org
Date of previous inspection	13–15 November 2018

Information about this school

- Carmel Christian School is a non-selective independent Christian day school in Bristol, owned by Carmel Ministries International.
- The school opened in 2000.
- Since the last standard inspection, the school has undergone significant change. The headteacher and deputy headteacher retired in December 2020. The school's current headteacher joined in December 2020 and is referred to as the early years manager. At the same time, the school changed its registration status with the Department for Education. The planned admission number reduced from 75 to 26, and the age range of pupils changed from three to 18 years to three to five years.
- The school is situated on one site and does not use alternative provision.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are taught in one early years class which caters for children from three years old. Children receive 15 to 30 free funded hours.
- Currently there are no children who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was last inspected in November 2018. The school did not meet all of the independent school standards and the overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate. In October 2019, a progress monitoring inspection took place and reported that the school still did not meet all of the independent school standards. This standard inspection also incorporated a progress monitoring inspection.
- The school's stated ethos is to: 'Promote a Christian ethos and worldview. By example and direct teaching, we [the school] follow and promote the teachings of Jesus, which has respect, love, and honour of all people, regardless of age, gender, race, ability or orientation, at its heart. Accordingly, our early years community is a place where children are encouraged to value and appreciate themselves and others as unique individuals'.
- Carmel Ministries International proprietorial body consists of the chair and three members who act as 'overseers'. There is an overseer for equipping, for assets and for pastoral care. In addition, there is a small governing body.

Information about this inspection

We 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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other staff who were present during the inspection.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the board, from Carmel Ministries International, who acts as the proprietorial body. A meeting was also held with the chair of the governing body. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, physical development and understanding of the world. Inspectors met with the headteacher who has responsibility for the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at children's work, talked to children about their work and discussed the school's approach to curriculum delivery with staff.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead, and scrutinised the school's single central register and safeguarding records. The inspection team also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- Inspectors observed children during the school day, including at playtimes. A range of documentation was scrutinised.
- We took account of the nine responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and six additional free-text responses.
- We considered the views of one member of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.

The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

During this inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous inspection.

The school now meets the previously failed standards

- Part 1 - Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(2), 2(2)(f), 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(f) and 3(g)
- The school has reduced its age range so that it now caters solely for early years children. The curriculum is appropriate, and staff plan and assess suitable activities across all areas of learning. Tasks are appropriate for the age of pupils. These standards are now met.
- Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage: Safeguarding and welfare requirements, paragraphs 3.21 and 3.22.
- The new early years leader is fostering a culture of teamwork. Staff are benefiting from a wide range of appropriate training and coaching to improve their skills and expertise. These standards are now met.

The school continues to not meet the previously failed standards.

- Part 3 – Paragraph 16, 16(a) and (b)

Leaders have still not ensured that adequate risk assessments are in place. Risk assessments are not personalised to the classroom or the children.

■ Part 8 – Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)–(c)

The proprietor has not ensured that there is sufficient capacity to make the much-needed improvements to the quality of leadership. New leaders do not have the experience that is required. Leaders are not familiar with the independent school standards. The standard in this part is not met.

■ Statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage: Safeguarding and welfare requirements, paragraph 3.64 remains unmet.

■ Leaders cannot demonstrate how they are managing risk. Risks assessments do not demonstrate how risks in the classroom will be removed or managed. The outdoor area has not been assessed for risk.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Carrington

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;

- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.

- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the statutory framework of the early years foundation stage. This is because the same safeguarding failings that are present in the school are also present in the early years. The relevant paragraphs from the statutory framework are 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.23 and 3.64.

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