

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Aided Infant School

Main Road,
Alvescot
Oxfordshire
OX18 2PU

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 28th June 2013

Date of last inspection: 7th February 2008

School's unique reference number: **123189**

Headteacher: Mrs Sam King

Inspector's name and number: The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

This is a small rural church school of 69 infant pupils. It draws from a largely advantageous catchment. It also serves a significant proportion of forces families. The school is predominantly White British.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are Outstanding

The outstanding nature of this school arises out of exemplary leadership of the headteacher, rector and governors and the strong support of staff and parents in doing all they can to secure the success of this church school.

Established strengths

- The strong relationships at all levels of the school including with the parent body that ensures Christian values support the all-round development of the children.
- The exemplary professional relationship between the headteacher and the rector and their compelling Christian vision for this church school.
- The highly effective governing body in challenging and supporting this church school to develop its church school aspect.
- The spiritual development of the children, in particular in reflection and the age-appropriate biblical knowledge of the children.

Focus for development

- Work with the diocese to ensure that the teaching of Religious Education (RE) is consistently outstanding across the school.
- Work with the diocese to develop a new governor and staff handbook that clearly sets out the school's Christian values, demonstrating their centrality to the work of the school and showing exactly where and how they are promoted.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

Strong relationships built upon Christian values are at the heart of this church school and result in a passion and drive to ensure the all-round development of the children. The school's mission statement of 'Belonging, Believing and Building a Future' is evident in all the work of the whole school enabling coherent practice. This secures high academic achievement and attainment and strong spiritual development by all children. The impact of these Christian values is shown in the exemplary behaviour of the children and their growing empathy and compassion for others. The children have a good biblical knowledge and as a result can apply biblical stories to their behaviour choices and decisions. One parent stated that, "this school gives children an excellent foundation as a person, and in that regard I don't think we could have a better school than St Peter's." The caring approach of the school also results in the school being particularly sensitive to the distinctive needs of forces families. Attendance at the school is good and issues around none attendance are dealt with effectively and compassionately. The school utilizes all opportunities it can to promote the multicultural understanding of the children helping them to appreciate the diversity of modern Britain and the wider world, such as utilizing staff to talk about Christianity in France and Poland from their experience. Children have an awareness of various world faiths resulting in a respect for children and adults of all faiths and none. The church and school operate as a focussed joint Christian community being effective in their missionary work for the Diocese of Oxford and achieving good outcomes for the locality.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to the life of the school and underpins the Christian ethos. It has a significant impact on the children's spiritual development. Planning for worship is thorough and takes account of the church year as well as Gospel values, which enhance the distinctiveness of the school. Most children speak enthusiastically about worship and how it helps them in aspects of their lives. Children are most inspired and engaged when they are actively involved for example in the recent drama of the Lame Man meeting Jesus. Pupils learn about the broader nature of God for example in the recent sequence on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. Worship themes often lead to charitable actions such as supporting Oxford Children's Hospital. Prayer and opportunities for quiet reflection are both a powerful and an important part of the worship and a significant strength of the school being developed in many ways and times across the school day. Children learn to be silent and to be still and to be open to an encounter with the Divine at this school. Prayer is a frequent feature of school life, certainly not confined to worship times. Staff and governors pray together and the children are encouraged to use opportunities for prayer supporting the communal aspect of prayer. The school emphasizes the importance of children's prayer by publishing them on the school's newsletters, which some parents say helps them to pray at home. The children are very familiar with a range of Anglican traditions and they usually enjoy worship in church, which happens at significant times of the year such as Easter and St Peter's Day. There is a strong tradition of school involvement in Sunday worship such as the recent Celebration of the Countryside which further enhances pupil's appreciation of the diversity of worship. An understanding of different types of worship is enhanced by regular visits from the rector and also other church leaders such as the Bishop of Dorchester and benefice church wardens. Evaluation of worship by the children and staff informs future plans and also reflects the impact that worship has on the community. Worship is organized well which, with effective staff training, has ensured that all staff lead worship confidently. The sincerity and relevance of worship ensures that pupils, staff and parents alike gain inspiration, are encouraged to grow spiritually and are personally affirmed by collective worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a high profile in the school and is well led. Consequently the subject is well resourced and staff receive appropriate professional development and monitoring to ensure high standards. Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding although the prevalence of outstanding teaching is not consistent across the whole school. RE is appropriately assessed supporting next steps in learning. The school makes good use of staff to record children's higher order oral work which helps them to challenge pupils thinking accordingly. Children are confident and adept at raising questions to explore ideas of interest and puzzlement such as the nature of God (Is God spirit or person or both? asked one child) and the origins of the universe in recent work on God's world. The RE curriculum is well considered and is frequently creative in nature which develops pupils spiritually as well as engaging them in their learning for example in the Celebrating Many Faiths Day, a role play wedding in the church and involvement in the Oxfordshire Gospel's Project. As a result, pupils achieve and attain highly with particular strengths in age-appropriate biblical knowledge and in reflection. Children value RE and therefore readily apply learning to their own lives. Children consider a range of religious traditions for example Judaism through a study of the Festival of Pesach. Visits to the church are well utilized developing pupils' experience and knowledge but there are insufficient visits to other places of religious worship to extend this religious knowledge and encounter. The school does, however, make good use of opportunities such as a Muslim parent to develop children's contextual religious understanding.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The governors, headteacher, rector and staff are all united in a compelling vision of this church school supported by a parent body who actively share in this vision. As a consequence, all the stake holders work together to ensure that the Christian values arising out of the mission statement are fostered to ensure the all-round development of the children. The professional relationship between the headteacher and rector is exemplary practice and their strong relationship results in a drive and passion to ensure that church and school are united in mission to secure the very best for the children and their community. Governors are strong in their understanding of the developmental needs of this church school. This is because they use appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools to challenge and support the school into continuous improvement in practice and in ensuring the church school aspect is central to all they do. However, the governors' and staff handbooks do not sufficiently highlight the school's values and their centrality to the work of the school and therefore do not support new members well enough. All stakeholders are involved in self-review and therefore have a shared commitment to this school. School leaders are proactive in succession planning which results in developing capacity for the future and in highly effective staff professional development. The school makes effective use of support from the diocese, benefice and community resulting in improved outcomes for children. The school is also proactive in supporting the wider church school family supporting succession for all church schools. RE has a high priority in the school and this results in effective practice and the high attainment and progress of the majority of children.