



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter's CofE VA Primary School

The Green
Cassington, Witney, Oxfordshire
OX29 4DN

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese:

Local authority: Not applicable

Date of inspection: 20th October 2015

Date of last inspection: 29th November 2010

School's unique reference number: 140915

Headteacher: Jeanette Millward

Inspector's name and number: Paul Armitage (Assessor: Jo Fageant 104)

School context

St Peter's is a small rural school in the heart of the village of Cassington, near Oxford. The school became part of the Eynsham Partnership Academy on 1st June 2014. St Peter's is the only voluntary aided school in the partnership. There are 105 pupils on roll with boys and girls in approximately equal numbers. 12 are supported by the pupil premium and eight have special educational needs, mostly linked to language difficulties. Almost all pupils are white British. There has been no Ofsted inspection since its conversion to becoming part of the academy. A new nursery building was opened recently.

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

- Christian values are successfully embedded in the school. This is particularly evident in the way in which pupils speak of their faith and use their faith to help them in their daily activities.
- The headteacher, governors, teachers, and almost all of the pupils and parents share a common Christian vision and excellent understanding of the school. This helps to drive improvement and ensure that everyone is valued.
- As a result of their Christian education, pupils are confident individuals and are always ready to express their thoughts and views including views on religion
- The school has an excellent relationship with the local church, thus enhancing the school's distinctive Christian character. Supported by the clergy, pupils' use of prayer is often exceptional.

Areas to improve

- Monitor the new religious education (RE) syllabus and its method of assessment to ensure that, over time it meets the different needs and perspectives of all pupils in a changing local, national and global context.
- Strengthen, further, pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths so that, in the longer term, they can give a confident account of their principal features as well as similarities and differences with Christianity.

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

The statement in the aims 'Above all, make the best of the gifts God has given you as a unique individual' is meaningful in this school; it is not just words. Teachers have a strong shared vision based on this aim and they translate this into care and consideration for all pupils. The aim has encouraged all teachers to work together to provide a rich academic curriculum as well as many other activities designed to support pupils' personal development. In class and in evidence drawn from samples of pupils' work, it is clear that pupils are given excellent support. Work is well planned to meet the differing needs of pupils. Teaching assistants are well deployed, supporting in particular, pupils with special educational needs. The result of this is that pupils also share the school's vision. Pupils interviewed during a review of their work spoke of how they are helped to do better and several spoke of the way they are encouraged to reflect and that this has helped them with aspects of their work they find difficult. This positive response by pupils to the school's vision is also supported by published data which indicates that pupils' academic performance has improved steadily over the last few years. The shared vision also results in excellent behaviour, high attendance and the school avoids excluding pupils. Relationships with adults and other children are excellent. The high quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also a reflection of the school's values. Children spoken to talked excitedly of the way that the school's vision is reflected in twelve core values that the school has developed recently to use as a framework for helping them develop their understanding of Christianity. This term, the value being explored is 'friendship' which is helping pupils understand diversity and respect for others. In conversation as well as in their prayers and poems displayed in the hall, pupils of all ages demonstrate an excellent understanding of its significance and how it links with the sayings of Jesus. Next term the value to be explored will be 'hope' and pupils are already showing strong interest in what it might mean. Pupils are also excited by their active role in activities at the local church where they participate in a variety of exciting activities, some of which are linked to work that they find challenging in RE. They particularly enjoy activities, at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The activities include worship in which pupils enjoy playing a significant role. Teachers do much to encourage individuals' self-esteem by providing well-organised after-school activities such as 'Kidzone' and opportunities to sing in the school choir. Children speak very positively of these experiences. They also love being 'Star of the Week' and are looking forward to a forthcoming school disco. A very strong feature of the school's vision to spread the words of Jesus and do his work is its involvement with the wider community. The pupils have a big role in this and have a clear understanding of its importance. For example, the school's charity work is very meaningful for pupils which they link with Christians caring for people. They have a good understanding of the reasons for organisations such as 'Children in Need'. The school's breakfast club has an important community role, much appreciated by parents and children.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is very successful at this school and is enjoyed by almost all the pupils and the staff and sometimes parents and other visitors. Everyone recognises that it is at the centre of the school's work and what is explored in collective worship inspires everyone and underpins all that they do during the school day. The worship is very well planned and includes sessions led by the clergy. Pupils like the clergy attending because it provides a link with the church but also because the sessions they lead are invariably fun. One such session attended by the inspector was much enjoyed by the pupils. It strengthened their understanding of how people can be viewed negatively and positively, linked very well with the value of 'friendship' and demonstrated, in a very practical way Jesus' teaching about people being loved. It linked in very well with the school's vision of being 'a generous heart'. The Pupils responded very well to questions about biblical stories and their meaning and to the lively activity in which they were involved. The pupils' singing was very joyful and they took the good opportunity for collective and individual prayers. Some pupils had the opportunity to lead on parts of the worship and this they did very well. Overall, there was a strong focus on Jesus' teaching and pupils have a simple but developing understanding of God and the Holy Spirit. The school regularly reviews all aspects of its Christian teaching and learning and has recently circulated a questionnaire to all children seeking their views on the way collective worship is conducted and its implications for pupils. Questions ranged from whether pupils enjoy the worship to more profound questions about its meaning. Part of the

motivation for the questionnaire was the recognition by teaching staff that not all pupils are Christian believers and that the school needs to find ways of supporting them. The headteacher and governors are now considering the implications in order to ensure that worship is relevant to all pupils.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Overall standards are in line with national expectations and progress overall is good.

The school has introduced the recently published RE syllabus for Oxfordshire schools and has developed its own scheme of work using schemes published by the Diocese of Oxford and Discovery RE. Teachers fully understand the requirements of the syllabus which provides students with plenty of opportunity for pupils to show creativity and originality and other skills which are important for children such as literacy, enquiry and evaluation. It is clear that pupils are responding well to the new syllabus and to the good teaching which takes account of the needs of different pupils. The inspector observed a class of older pupils exploring how Christians show their commitment to God. They also had to decide which was the best way. They did this very well, in particular drawing on their visits to church and their prior understanding of the meaning of and content of church services. There was a particularly good discussion about why the font is placed near to the door of the church. A look at pupils' exercise books during the lesson indicated that there is much appropriate cross-referencing to passages from the Bible in all aspects of their work and that pupils understand the meaning of these passages. Other faiths are included in the syllabus; for example Judaism and Hinduism. Islam is included for older pupils. There is evidence of good work on other faiths in pupils' exercise books but when interviewed, older pupils are not always able to demonstrate confident understanding of all aspects of what they have been taught about non-Christian faiths. There is an assessment system which is currently under review in order to introduce a new one, matching more closely the new assessment procedures for English, mathematics and other subjects. The management of the subject is good. The headteacher regularly monitors the subject effectively, not least because the syllabus is new. The headteacher is very well informed about new developments in the subject and this has positively influenced both the curriculum and the teaching. Overall, RE has a high profile within the school's curriculum and it makes a good contribution to the Christian values of pupils in the school. It also makes a significant contribution of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

Overall, leaders in the school confidently articulate their clear Christian vision. They share clear Christian values and work hard to monitor the impact of these values on all aspects of the life of the school. In consequence, they are responsive and sensitive to the need for sensible change. This is reflected in the school's effective improvement planning which includes appropriate training for staff directed at meeting the needs of all pupils. Leaders have ensured that worship and RE are very well informed by Christian values and that both have strong roles in the curriculum. Both are at the centre of the school community and are much appreciated by staff and pupils. There is a strong community function as the school works closely with parents, church and other schools in the Eynsham Partnership and this ensures that staff and governors are well aware of a broad range of wider community issues. The school has benefitted substantially from collaboration with the other Partnership schools, particularly in relation to the curriculum. In turn, St Peter's has been able to offer them support, for example, in developing RE. The clergy provide very valuable spiritual support.

There is evidence that there is successful collaboration between the Partnership and diocese in supporting the school as it moves forward. There is a high proportion of diocesan representatives on the Partnership board, including a Foundation Governor from the school. This ensures that major issues are discussed with the school's unique Christian character in mind. There is also collaboration in training and educational support such as that provided for the development of the new RE curriculum and collective worship. The first area for development indicated in the last SIAMS inspection report has been addressed very effectively. There are now places for quiet reflection including the 'Reflection House' which has been installed in the grounds. Pupils interviewed say they have somewhere to go when they need to calm down. The second area, the development of an assessment system for RE, was addressed successfully and, as indicated earlier in this report, is now being carefully revised again to give RE a similar form of assessment to the new arrangements for other subjects.

SIAMS report October 2015 St Peter's CofE VA Primary School, Cassington OX29 4D