



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	Marston Road Oxford OX3 0EJ
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Oxford
Name of multi-academy trust/ federation	N/A
Date of inspection	12 January 2017
Date of last inspection	February 2012
School's unique reference number	123143
Headteacher	Rosalind Owen
Inspector's name and number	Janet Northing 792

School context

St Michael's is an average sized primary school close to the centre of Oxford. The school community reflects the diverse population of Oxford. Approximately 25% of children attending the school have English as an additional language. Nearly 18% of children have an Islamic faith background. Pupil mobility is slightly higher than the national average. The number of pupils accessing pupil premium is lower than the national figure, as is the percentage of children with special educational needs. Currently there are no children in school requiring a statement or educational health care plan. The new headteacher took up the post in September 2016.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- This inclusive church school expresses its Christian character through a deep commitment to serving the needs of the multi-cultural community in which it is set.
- Leaders consistently promote a Christian vision for the school that impacts positively on the lives of the whole school community.
- All members of the school community value collective worship that is particularly supportive of learners' spiritual and moral development.
- Religious education (RE) has a high profile within the school curriculum and the subject makes a significant contribution to the Christian character of the school.
- Links with St Michael and All Angels Church impact positively on the school's Christian ethos and the lives of the children and their families.

Areas to improve

- Establish a formal system of monitoring that effectively evaluates the impact of the school's distinctive Christian character, collective worship and RE in both policy and practice.
- Put in place a spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) school policy that includes a clear definition of spirituality. Identify regular experiences in the curriculum as a whole for pupils to reflect and explore their spirituality more deeply.
- Extend the leadership of collective worship to include pupils in regular planning, leading and evaluation to deepen their understanding and appreciation of worship.
- Fully meet the need of all pupils in RE by ensuring learning is routinely differentiated to ensure high attaining pupils in particular are challenged.

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

The school has in place a set of twelve core values chosen for this academic year. These are underpinned by biblical teaching making them distinctively Christian in character. A Year 2 child exemplified this when using the old testament story of David and Goliath to exemplify the values of hope and courage. 'David had hope that he would be brave enough to defeat Goliath.' The school's values are also interpreted as shared human values making them accessible to those of other faiths and none. The school's Christian ethos contributes to the creation of a safe and inclusive learning environment that supports each child to achieve individual success. Currently academic achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 is above or in line with the national average in mathematics and reading. This is also true for vulnerable pupils in both Key Stage 1 and 2 whose attainment is in line with or slightly above the national average. However, progress and attainment in writing across the school is currently well below that of other schools nationally. The school is committed to the development of the whole child and recognises their value as a unique individual made in the image of God. This is expressed through the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum that is supported by a good range of extra curricular activities. This provision promotes SMSC and personal development, and wellbeing. In response to the Christian ethos of the school learners display good behaviour at all times. Attendance for all pupils in 2016 was slightly below the national average and lower for vulnerable pupils. Although not explicit in its attendance policy the school reflects its Christian character when seeking to promote good attendance. This it does through offering pastoral support to families and through the provision of an emotional support worker who works with individual children. Constructive relationships are a feature of the school with staff acting as positive role models for the children. This underpins the community's sense of being a school family that enables it to celebrate its diversity and effectively embrace difference on a daily basis. As a result learners are fully aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and show respect to those who follow other religious traditions or none. Experiences offered in RE and collective worship provide well for learners' spiritual development. However, the lack of a school SMSC policy and shared interpretation of spirituality means that experiences for pupils to explore their spirituality further are not routinely identified in all areas of the curriculum.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

All members of the school community recognise the importance of collective worship in the life of the school. Children articulate that worship creates a sense of calmness within them because they have time to reflect and think about things. Adults also value this time to be still and quiet in the midst of the busyness of the school day. Themes for worship are planned jointly by the headteacher and vicar, and primarily focus on exploring the school's values within their Christian context. For example, during an act of worship focusing on an old testament story illustrating King Solomon's wisdom, the school community reflected on the importance of honesty as key to discovering truth. Children understand the importance of prayer in their own spiritual journey describing it as an opportunity to say thank you or sorry to God. They also recognise their responsibility to pray for the needs of others. In addition learners are inspired through worship to take responsibility for helping other people in practical ways by supporting a range of charitable organisations. A Year 3 child on recalling the teaching of Jesus that, 'It is better to give than to receive,' used this as motivation to support the work of charities. This also illustrates the impact of sound biblical teaching within worship that enables children to appreciate the importance of Jesus Christ to the Christian faith. Pupils clearly express an age appropriate understanding of the Trinitarian nature of Christianity. Spaces for prayer and reflection are evident in classrooms throughout the school enhancing learners' spiritual awareness. In particular, the interactive nature of the reflection area in Year 1 takes children beyond the artefacts by engaging their interest and encouraging their involvement. Children attend church to celebrate major Christian festivals adding to their appreciation of the Anglican liturgical cycle and their sense of awe and wonder. Children regularly experience a range of leaders in worship that includes the vicar and other clergy from St Michael and All Angels and staff at the school. Current monitoring and evaluation of collective worship lacks the rigour required to secure its on-going improvement. Though learners enjoy contributing to elements within worship they do not have sufficient experience of planning, leading and evaluating acts of worship for themselves.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are at least in line with or slightly above the other core subjects. Children's progress in RE is similarly in line with other core subjects. A number of children from vulnerable groups who find English and Mathematics challenging achieve more highly in RE. The subject has a high profile within the school curriculum as a whole thereby impacting positively on the Christian character and values of the school. For example in a Year 1 lesson focusing on the big question of 'What do Christians believe about the world?' pupils explored the biblical story of creation. In addition, RE contributes significantly to pupil's spiritual development through space for reflection within the learning experience. Through learning about faiths and cultures represented within the school and local community learners are able to appreciate links between beliefs and value systems. A Year 5 child expressed this very well when saying; 'I like it when we learn about my religion because it shows that it is valued.' Visits to places of worship including Christchurch Cathedral and the Islamic Centre support children's understanding of the important part that faith plays in people's lives. Faith boxes containing artefacts, books and posters ensure that teachers are well resourced when delivering learning in the subject. The majority of RE teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice. As a consequence pupils are enthusiastic about their learning experiences with many describing RE as their favourite subject. The school follows the Oxford diocese scheme of work which reflects the National Society Statement of Entitlement for RE. The subject leader is very experienced in the role and demonstrates a good level of subject expertise. The school's monitoring and evaluation involves the subject leader in monitoring planning and RE books as well as learning walks. While assessment in RE involves the tracking of children's progress over time it does not consistently inform lesson planning on a weekly basis. As a consequence, learning is not routinely differentiated across the school to ensure that the need of all children is routinely met. In particular high attaining children are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve the higher levels.

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

The headteacher expresses a vision for the school that places Christian values at its heart and a genuine desire to serve the needs of the school and local community. A dedicated governing body and staff team support her in this. The school's Christian ethos is instrumental in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment in which children know that they are valued as unique human beings. This also impacts on staff who express that they feel well supported in their role and that their contribution to the school community is appreciated. The Christian character underpins positive attitudes to learning resulting in standards of achievement that are above or in line with the national average in mathematics and reading. Meetings of the governing body commence with prayer reflecting the school's Christian character. The headteacher's report to governors includes a section on church school links and SIAMS. Whilst this is informative, it does not focus on evaluating the impact of the church school links on the life of the school and local community. The school invests in continuing development for governors and staff across the school, supported by its links with the Oxford City Church Schools Group, Cherwell Partnership and Oxford diocese. In this way the school is preparing those with potential for future leadership across church schools. Links with St Michael and All Angels Church and the involvement of the vicar in the life of the school enriches the lives of learners and their families. Parents speak warmly of the support their children receive and are appreciative of the school's nurturing and open door policy. Good leadership of RE and collective worship is instrumental in ensuring their invaluable contribution to the school's Christian ethos. The positive influence of RE and collective worship on children's behaviour and SMSC development are strengths of the school. The Statement of Entitlement for RE is met. A SIAMS group comprising of the headteacher, senior leadership team, chair of governors and committee chairs is the main vehicle for self-evaluation. The infrequency of meetings and a focus on provision rather than its impact has not led to sustained improvement over time. Other monitoring by foundation governors involving the observation of acts of collective worship is also infrequent and lacks the rigour necessary to improve the school's practice.

SIAMS report January 2017 St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Oxford OX3 0EJ