



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Oundle Church of England Primary School

Cotterstock Road
Oundle
PE8 5HA

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Date of inspection: 29 February 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 121984

Headteacher: Janet McMurdo

Inspector's name and number: Liz Youngman 465

School context

Following local re-organisation in September 2015, the school now caters for children up to eleven years old. It has two sites with Reception to Year 2 on the previous lower school site near the town centre. Years 3 to 6 are in a former middle school on the edge of town. This large building is currently being extensively refurbished to accommodate the whole school. There are 126 Year 6 children from the previous middle school whilst other year groups have an average of 53 children in each. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with special educational needs or a disability is well below the national average, as is the proportion of children supported by pupil premium funding.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Oundle Church of England Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Distinctively Christian leadership is exceptionally effective in maintaining and developing the Christian character of the school, during a time of considerable upheaval and change.
- High quality religious education (RE) strongly impacts children's spiritual development and understanding of Christianity and other faiths.
- Very strong links with St Peter's Church ensure the significant impact of a range of worship experiences on the whole school community.

Areas to improve

- Strengthen the school's Christian character, when the primary school is together on the same site, by providing reflection spaces that impact children's spiritual development.
- Enhance the outstanding practice in collective worship by extending the roles played by pupils in planning and leading worship for the full primary age range.

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

Excellent leadership by the headteacher and governors ensures that relationships between all members of the community are positive and based on the school's Christian values of compassion, friendship, trust, koinonia (community), hope and forgiveness. These values are explicitly displayed and deeply embedded in the life of the school. They are readily articulated by members of the school community including staff, parents, governors and children. The school's ethos of 'Learning together for life in a Christian community' means that all groups of pupils are well supported in their learning and wellbeing, showing strong learning outcomes with high standards in Key Stage 1 over many years. Year 6 pupils are currently making good progress despite experiencing considerable change during the key stage. The school leadership placed them in five smaller classes in Year 6, impacting well on their personal and academic development. The learners themselves describe this time as 'confusing', but add, 'now we're used to everything'. Attendance is above the national average and exclusions are very rare, reflecting the children's enthusiasm for learning in this Christian environment. Respect for diverse communities is promoted through high quality RE lessons and displays, prominent in both school sites. Examples of this include the older children's studies on the work of Christian Aid and Islamic Relief, as well as their learning about the milestones in the lives of Jewish children. Some RE lessons of the highest quality evidence how RE makes an excellent contribution to the Christian character of the school and children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. These creative RE lessons sometimes include visitors from other faith communities and dramatic role play, for example, on the children's feelings if Jesus really was to visit their class. One child commenting, 'Jesus inspires me because he's kind and thoughtful'. The youngest children's responses to RE are given high priority and are recorded in their Early Years learning journals.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Distinctively Christian collective worship is given a high priority in this school and careful planning by the coordinator ensures that children have similar experiences on both sites. Learners of all ages engage very well with worship experiences that clearly impact on their relationships within school. The school's Christian values are expressed strongly through worship and linked well to the church year. For example focusing on forgiveness during Lent. The vicar and clergy from St Peter's Church regularly lead worship in school and at special services held in church. The positive impact on the school community is seen in the way many families accept the invitation to attend the church's Christingle service. This clearly demonstrates the value placed on these inspirational worship experiences. The clear links on the school and church websites emphasise the strong relationships and shared values, advertising worship held in both settings to the wider community. Learners have thorough knowledge about the teachings of Jesus and show good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, although they did not know the term, 'Trinity'. One child said the Holy Spirit 'is always next to you even when you're asleep'. Another showed developing personal spirituality saying the Holy Spirit means that, 'you always have someone you can trust and pray to'. Pupils and staff are frequently involved in evaluations of collective worship that are well recorded. Learners plan worship with teachers but could take an even greater role in planning and leading. Many are confident in writing and leading prayers, often spontaneously, showing learners understand the value of prayer. Some describe how they use prayers learnt in school, like the Lord's Prayer and the school prayer, in their own lives. Many take the opportunity to use the reflective corner in their classroom during the school day. One child described going there to think and say, 'a prayer to God to help me do better work'. The changing environment of the school during the refurbishment has meant limited access for older children to appropriate reflective areas in shared spaces and outside the building this year.

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

The leadership of the headteacher has been pivotal in the development of this exceptional church school. She consistently lives out and promotes a vision for the school that is rooted in its Christian values. In partnership with staff and governors, the headteacher is ensuring that a commitment to preserving the Christian vision is explicit in the strategic development of this school. Effective evaluation of the school's performance and distinctiveness leads directly to appropriate strategies for improvement. These include new class organisation and revised systems for assessing and tracking pupil progress, achieving much in the short time since the expansion. The inspection confirms parents' views that the school 'does a great job of encouraging all children's gifts'. Partnerships are a strong feature of this school that has koinonia at its heart. The impact of this is displayed in the way parents appreciate the partnership they share with the school and the approachability of the headteacher and staff. This is further demonstrated in the way new families quickly feel included in the school community. The school works very effectively with the diocese, giving professional development a high priority. Some senior staff are preparing for future leadership of church schools through attendance at diocesan training events. Additionally, the RE coordinator is undertaking a year-long RE course with diocesan support. As a 'Local Leader of Education', the headteacher offers support to other church school leaders within the diocese. There are very strong links both with the parish church, St Peter's, and the local Baptist church that meets in the school building. St Peter's Church website highlights its support of the school and the shared special services. These enhance the spiritual experience for the wider school community. The points for development from the previous inspection have been addressed appropriately when it was a lower school but need revisiting now the school caters for the full primary age range. Statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are fully met.

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