

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Northbourne Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School	Cockroft Road Didcot Oxfordshire OX11 8LJ
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese/Methodist District	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Name of multi-academy trust	N/A
Date/s of inspection	2 February 2017
Date of last inspection	29 March 2012
School's unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 123221
Headteacher	Paul Shaughnessy
Inspector's name and number	Ian Lewis 629

School context

Northbourne is an average sized primary school currently with 305 children on roll. It is situated on the north side of Didcot in Oxfordshire. Its children come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, the majority being White British. On entry pupils show a correspondingly wide range of starting points. Both the head teacher and the deputy head have been in post since the previous inspection. However, during the past three years there has been considerable turmoil in staffing due to long term sickness and maternity leave. The school has established a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the parish church and its clergy.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Northbourne as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The school's exceptionally strong and vibrant Christian ethos which is firmly based on distinctly Christian values has created a community in which each member is loved and cared for as a unique child of God resulting in the pupils developing confidence in their own abilities, achieving and progressing both educationally and socially.
- The school's leaders have a distinct vision of the school's ongoing development within a strongly Christian context resulting in the school's Christian character shaping the lives and learning of all in its community.
- The extremely firm and mutually beneficial partnership established with the parish church together with the links forged with other churches in the area has strengthened the school's ethos of love and care for all, creating within it a distinct and supportive Christian community.

Areas to improve

- To develop the children's understanding of Christianity in relationship to the other major faiths together with their understanding of diversity of faith and culture, devise strategies to enable them to meet and interact with practitioners of those faiths in school.
- To further challenge pupils' thinking in RE and to enable them to deepen their understanding of Christianity and other world faiths, devise systems to be used extensively and consistently throughout the school of using questioning strategies alongside comments when marking work.

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

Northbourne Primary School has, at the heart of its life, an exceptionally strong Christian ethos. This is founded firmly on the Christian values of love, community, integrity and perseverance, developed from the 'God's Storyteller' scheme for collective worship. Each of these is directly linked to a Biblical quotation. Leaders refer to these Christian values when evaluating the impact of the school's ethos. The pupils live by the values, clearly evidenced in their excellent behaviour and in their care for all around them. They speak knowledgeably about the values saying: 'They are guidelines for what you should do and they make our school a better place'. Parents wholly endorse this, a typical remark being 'The values are all around the school very strongly and they filter into home life when, for example, we say grace together.' Through its Christian ethos the school ensures that all pupils feel safe and secure. They say, 'All the staff keep us together in one close community and it feels as if we've got a shield all round us.' Parents endorse this commenting 'Our children are kept completely safe and are in great hands'. Both pupils and parents go on to emphasise that within the school's culture there is no bullying and that minor incidents and disagreements are resolved quickly and effectively. Pupils clearly enjoy being at school evidenced in comments by them and their parents who say, 'We feel blessed that our children come to Northbourne School'. This is further supported by evidence within the school's performance data which shows that attendance is continuously improving. As a direct result of the school's Christian ethos of care and nurture, its pupils have developed a love of learning and achievement. This is very evident both in discussions with them about learning and during classroom observations. The success of this is evidenced in the school's performance data showing overall good progress and achievement. Pupils identified as having emotional barriers to their learning are given excellent support by the school's assistant for emotional literacy. This is a role created by the school's leaders as an integral part of its Christian vision of care for all. Through this strategy vulnerable pupils learn to recognise talents they possess and develop confidence in their own abilities, the school's data giving evidence of the closing attainment gap. Religious education (RE) and collective worship play an extremely important part in continuously developing the school's Christian ethos. This is a direct result of their strong focus on the Christian values through Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. Through cross-curricular themes such as 'journeys', pupils are developing an empathetic approach to worldwide issues, in this case the refugee crisis. This has recently further motivated them to support a charity concerned with Syrian refugees. Discussion with pupils gives evidence that through learning about other faiths and cultures in RE they are developing a good understanding of Christianity as a world faith. Further to this they understand that Christians worship in different ways dependent on culture and global circumstances. However, there are insufficient visits by representatives of other faiths to further widen pupils' understanding and therefore respect of diversity. There is a strong sense of spirituality within Northbourne School. There are good opportunities throughout each day for pupils to engage in quiet reflection and prayer. Every classroom has an area set aside for reflection which pupils say they enjoy using. The outside environment echoes this with quiet areas where pupils and adults can appreciate the awe and wonder of God in nature. Prayer is seen as a natural part of the school day. Discussion with pupils gives clear evidence that they are developing a good understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer. A typical comment is, 'It's a way to think about others and thank God for all He's done for us'. Through such regular opportunities the spiritual development of the pupils is very strong with them becoming good reflective learners. A strong partnership has been developed with the local community, particularly with the parish church and with other local Christian denominations. Through these links pupils are developing an excellent understanding of community and of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in the wider world.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is extremely important in the daily life of Northbourne School. It both strengthens and affirms the school's distinctly Christian values through its strongly Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. The impact of this is evident throughout the school in the way all in its community treat one another with love and respect. Everybody feels totally included in collective worship whatever their faith or denomination, if any. This is a result of its moral content and the intense feeling of a shared experience. Enjoyment was clearly evident in the act of collective worship observed. All in the school's community were present, taking part enthusiastically but with clear reverence. Pupils are actively involved in all aspects of worship and in particular with the presentation and in leading the prayers. Singing is clearly seen as an expression of joy in worship and is joined in with evident enjoyment by all. Observation and discussion with staff, children and parents gives evidence that there is a strong focus on prayer and of the person of Jesus Christ, pupils being encouraged to write and use their own prayers. Through collective worship pupils are developing their understanding of the Trinity. This is illustrated at the start by the lighting of a three-wicked candle, all those present using the words 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' as the flames are lit. Pupils' understanding is further evidenced during discussion when they confidently explain the tripartite nature of God. Through collective worship pupils are developing a good understanding of Anglican practice and tradition. The close partnership established with the parish church strongly supports this. Pupils frequently visit the church both for worship and curriculum purposes. In addition, the priest in charge very regularly leads worship in the school. As a direct result, pupils are becoming familiar with Anglican liturgy through, for example, saying 'Peace be with you'

together with its response at the start of worship. Planning for collective worship is meticulous. Strongly led by the head teacher it closely involves both staff and pupils. There is a very strong focus on the school's Christian values mainly based on the 'God's Storyteller' scheme. Pupils say how much they enjoy these stories and discussion gives evidence that they are able to relate the themes to their own lives. Parents describe how much they enjoy attending worship whenever possible and particularly when it is held in the parish church. Pupils comment that they enjoy taking an active part and describe how they are given regular opportunities both to plan and lead collective worship. Parents strongly confirm this, going on to describe how children are encouraged to share their own experiences through acts of worship they have devised independently. Both the quality of provision and the impact of Collective worship on the school's community are rigorously monitored and evaluated. This process involves all stakeholders through questionnaires and personal contact, deepening their sense of being part of the school's community. Evidence from records of staff and governors' meetings shows that the results of evaluations are discussed. This in turn leads to continued development and improvement in collective worship evidenced in the school's planning documents.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education (RE) is viewed by this school as extremely important, being treated as a core subject within the overall curriculum. Through it pupils are developing an excellent understanding of the Christian values underpinning the school's daily life, achieved through a clear focus on Biblical teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. Pupils say they enjoy RE lessons, finding them 'fun but challenging'. This is endorsed by parents who say that their children often enjoy relating at home what they have learnt in RE. This enjoyment was clearly evident in the lessons observed which were good with outstanding elements, particularly in the teachers' use of questioning to challenge and extend pupils' thoughts and ideas. Pupils take an active part in their learning particularly in asking questions and responding. They listen to and respect the thoughts and suggestions of others and are therefore confident in giving their own views. 'We like listening to other people's ideas' is a typical comment in discussion. RE is strongly led by the subject leader who works closely with staff resulting in good provision and development. Planning is thorough and is based securely on the agreed syllabus. This has resulted in the pupils' very good depth of knowledge and understanding, demonstrated in both lessons and in discussion. RE is delivered both as a discrete subject and, wherever possible, as cross-curricular. Through the latter approach pupils show that they are developing an understanding that faith and particularly Christianity, has a wide sphere of influence. For example, a geography-based study of water includes learning about the importance of water within various faiths. Commenting on this, pupils say, 'We love finding out how religion fits in with other topics!' The use of whole days dedicated to RE particularly at the end of units gives added importance to the subject. Discussion with pupils and parents gives evidence that the concentrated nature of the days both consolidates and further extends their learning in RE. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensures that classroom practice and learning throughout the school is at least good. Attainment and progress in RE, evidenced in the school's curriculum data, is good and is at least in line with the core subjects. Effective tracking ensures that the attainment and progress of individual pupils is charted resulting in further challenge or support where needed. This has resulted in overall good progress evidenced across the school. Relevant comments are made when marking pupils' work but there is insufficient use of deeper questioning to further challenge their thinking.

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

The school's leaders strongly promote the school's Christian vision. The values which underpin it are clearly visible throughout the school, are prominently displayed on the website and are on all correspondence. The impact of this is that all in the school's community both know and live by its Christian values. This in turn has created a caring and nurturing school which pupils very much enjoy attending. As a result, they are developing self-confidence in their own abilities, achieving and progressing both academically and socially. Leaders actively involve all stakeholders in their evaluation of the impact of the school's Anglican character. All say they feel involved, parents in particular speaking enthusiastically of being asked for their views regarding school development. They go on to say, 'There is a deep culture of listening at Northbourne'. All evaluation is directly linked to the school's strategic planning which is strongly based on the school's distinctly Christian character. Extensive monitoring and evaluation by leaders has resulted in outstanding self-evaluation which is clearly the basis for the school's strong strategic planning. Leaders ensure that all staff benefit from targeted professional development which results in the good practice and subsequently very good achievement seen throughout the school. Leadership potential among staff is recognised and addressed. The impact of this is seen in the strong leadership of RE and collective worship. This has resulted in excellent provision and ongoing development in both areas. The provision in both RE and collective worship meets current statutory requirements. The strong partnership established with the parish church and its community strengthens the school's Anglican character. This is further enhanced through well-established links with other Christian churches in the area, particularly the Baptist church. Through this, pupils are developing a good understanding of the breadth of Christianity and of their roles and responsibilities as members of the worldwide Christian community.