



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St. Paul's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Oxford Road
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG41 2YJ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Wokingham
Dates of inspection: 23 May 2016
Date of last inspection: 7 July 2011
School's unique reference number: 109987
Headteacher: Julieanne Taylor
Inspector's name and number: Jenny Earp 288

School context

St. Paul's is a larger than average, three-form entry voluntary controlled Junior school with 384 pupils on roll, serving the area of West Wokingham. Approximately 90 pupils entering each year come from the Walter Infant School. The school has undertaken extensive refurbishment in recent years and now has excellent outdoor facilities, including a prayer garden and a purpose built Learning Lodge for the delivery of creative arts. There have been significant changes in staff and the governing body this year, including a new deputy appointed in September, 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Paul's CE Junior School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian vision and spiritual leadership of the headteacher, supported by staff, governors and clergy ensure the continual renewal of the distinctive Christian ethos
- Respectful staff model the school's Christian values and this has a positive impact on the nurturing care and personal development of pupils
- Collective worship is inspiring and inclusive, reinforcing the school's Christian values and provides outstanding opportunities for spiritual development
- There are strong partnerships with the local and wider community and especially with St. Paul's Church

Areas to improve

- Embed monitoring procedures in religious education, including the implementation of a rigorous system for assessment
- Extend pupils' learning of other faiths and cultures in order to deepen their understanding and respect for diverse communities

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

St Paul's Junior School provides a very positive learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve well. It is an inclusive, friendly school where relationships between children and staff are excellent. The Christian character of the school has a significant impact on the academic standards, personal development and wellbeing of all pupils, who make good progress across the year groups. For instance, In 2015, 91% of pupils achieved the expected level or above at the end of Key Stage 2 assessments. Pupils are nurtured academically and personally because the school provides the best learning opportunities. These include initiatives such as the 'C3B4ME', system through which pupils learn how to develop strategies to promote independent learning. Pupils describe this as 'when you get stuck you don't give in, you try three things before asking for help'. Pupils say they enjoy being at St. Paul's and 'feel nice and safe and loved'. They especially appreciate the Brainbox Room and 'bubble time', when they are given opportunities to talk with a trusted adult about any difficulties or problems they may be experiencing. Several pupils reported that this method had resolved issues that had been important to them. The school promotes the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils well through the rich and broad curriculum, as well as the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as singing with local schools, history workshops, theatre performances and talent assemblies. The Christian character shapes the relationships between all members of the school community and this can be seen in the way everyone values one another and recognises the unique contribution each person makes. An example of this is how the school responds to the individual needs of all pupils by offering them bespoke, highly effective provision. The Christian character promotes an understanding of and respect for diverse communities through the curriculum and worship. However, the school rightly identifies the need to focus on extending pupils' knowledge of diversity of faith and culture by inviting more visitors from different faith backgrounds into school and by facilitating visits to diverse places of worship. Religious education (RE) contributes well to the Christian character of the school and pupils are excited and challenged by the subject. This was seen in three RE lessons observed on the day of the inspection. For instance, a Year 6 class was actively engaged in learning about the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam. Evidence in RE books reveals that pupils are encouraged to think with empathy about the big questions of life. This was shown in a piece of work by a Year 5 pupil writing about Christian faith as Mother Theresa: 'I felt extremely joyful, praising God that through his power, my actions made a wonderful difference'. Parents find the school very welcoming and feel their children are nurtured well. The headteacher, in particular, goes 'beyond the call of duty' to support the children and help anyone in need. The school works in close partnership with families facing significant challenges or change and draws on the expertise of services such as Daisy's Dream and other therapeutic services. This is greatly valued by parents who are currently facing such difficulties.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship clearly holds a very important place in the life of the school and is viewed by all members of the school community as a time of peace, tranquillity and spiritual reflection. The worship programme is well planned by the headteacher and rector, with strong emphasis on Christian values, reflecting the annual church calendar and festivals throughout the year. A range of leaders from different Christian traditions offer pupils a rich experience of worship. Systematic evaluation, involving all stakeholders, enables improvements to be implemented swiftly. Worship underpins the Christian ethos of the school because it allows children to explore and gain a growing understanding of the meaning of each Christian value, relating it to their own lives. Emphasis is placed on a daily 'takeaway thought', which

is shared as a reflection at the end of each act of collective worship. Pupils are encouraged to apply the Christian value to daily life at school. For instance by asking, 'What kind of friend are you?' and 'How can you encourage someone today?' Themes frequently link specific Christian values with Bible stories and teaching about the life of Jesus. Pupils are actively involved in worship, often answering questions about what they have heard and explaining how they can apply this to their daily lives. For example, in the worship observed, based on the Christian value of friendship, pupils were asked to decide how good a friend Peter was to Jesus, using a quiz panel format with points from 1 to 10. This was well received and all pupils were engaged and interested. The Lord's prayer, first said out loud by all, then afterwards signed silently using simple actions, served to enhance the worship experience further. Music plays an important part in establishing a calm, purposeful atmosphere when the school comes together as a community. Pupils understand that prayer is a means of talking to God, reciting a range of prayers by heart and understanding their meaning. Worship provides opportunities for the children to participate and respond in prayer, enhancing their spiritual development further. Pupils understand the value of personal prayer and reflection and are able to say that we can ask God for help, guidance or simply to give thanks. All staff attend and lead worship regularly and as a result pupils experience different styles of worship and can see that everyone in the school community is involved. The school has created a tranquil outdoor prayer garden, which has had a positive impact on the spiritual development of pupils. Children write their own prayers and post them in prayer boxes located around the school. Year 5 pupils have also hung their prayers on the trees in the prayer garden. Pupils greatly value this special area of peace and reflection, with one child remarking, 'It is a nice, peaceful place that helps to calm you down and think of a solution to your problems'. Children say they enjoy worship because they are often involved in the planning of worship as well as writing prayers, especially for Friday assemblies. Pupils are given time to record their thoughts and feelings in a Learning Log. Pupils understand the value and purpose of worship and readily explain the symbolism of the cross and lighted candles, which they say represent 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. This illustrates that pupils are showing a growing awareness of the trinity. Parents say they appreciate being invited to class assemblies and being part of the services held throughout the year at the local church of St. Paul's. As a result, links with the church are strong and this has a positive impact on the spiritual development of the whole school community.

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

Leadership and management promote the Christian distinctiveness exceptionally well and all work together to promote the school's Christian character. In particular, the headteacher's strong Christian vision influences every aspect of the school's work. She is relentless in her focus on raising standards of achievement and wellbeing for each individual child. The monitoring and evaluation by governors is robust, continually improving and addressing pupil achievement and the school's Christian distinctiveness. As a result, St. Paul's is an inclusive community with a strong sense of Christian purpose for all. Governors support the headteacher in actively encouraging professional, spiritual and personal development, preparing staff effectively for future leadership in church schools. New staff are supported well in understanding the importance of the Christian character of the school and relationships at the school are strong and supportive. As well as the partnership with the local church and Diocese, there are strong links with parents, who praise the approachable and caring staff, who treat every child as 'unique and special'. Governors provide the right balance of challenge and support and are regular visitors to the school. For instance, foundation governors support worship, help with community activities and church visits. They meet with the school council fortnightly and report their discussions back to the whole governing body. The children raise money enthusiastically for charities and good causes. They know they can make a difference and actively endeavour to do so by raising money for local, as well as national and global charities. The newly appointed religious education coordinator approaches her role with enthusiasm and is raising the profile of the subject. The school has worked closely with the diocese to revise the RE curriculum and to develop a shared vision, which is closely linked to the Christian values. Although a substantial action plan for RE is in place and monitoring of the subject is undertaken, systems, particularly in the areas of assessment and lesson observations, are yet to be embedded. The school council is used effectively to promote pupil voice and children often give feedback on their experiences at St. Paul's, expressing how the school is distinctively Christian. The arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements and all issues for development arising from the last inspection have been addressed and are now real strengths. Pupils, parents, staff and governors speak with pride about the school. As one parent wrote poignantly; 'St Paul's is a truly remarkable school led by an even more remarkable headteacher'.