



## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Checkendon Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Checkendon  
Reading  
RG8 0SR

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 5 May 2016

Date of last inspection: June 2011

School's unique reference number: 123200

Headteacher: Gillian Seymour

Inspector's name and number: Miranda Robinson (Assessor: Jo Fageant 104)

#### School context

The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school where most of the pupils are of white British heritage. Pupils come from Checkendon with a significant number drawn from neighbouring villages outside the catchment area. The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium grant is low. The headteacher has been in post since May 2014 following a term as acting headteacher. She was previously the assistant headteacher. This followed the ending in 2013 of an executive headship arrangement with another local Church of England School.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Checkendon CofE (Aided) Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- The commitment of school leaders to the Christian vision for the school ensures a focus on meeting the needs of each pupil.
- The introduction of core Christian values has strengthened the Christian character of the school.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the place of prayer and reflection in their lives. This makes a major contribution to their spiritual development.

#### Areas to improve

- Enhance the contribution religious education (RE) makes to pupils' personal and cultural development by ensuring consistently well-informed links are made between Christianity and other religions.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to plan and lead collective worship to further enhance their enjoyment and understanding of worship.

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

The values etched on the front door proclaim Checkendon Primary School's identity as a Church of England school. Pupils recognise that the values of respect, courage, integrity,

compassion and hope are rooted in the New Testament. Pupil 'values ambassadors' work with the headteacher to help the school live out the values. One such initiative was the weekly school values awards that recognise and celebrate pupils who demonstrate a core value. Courage and hope are the values which reinforce the school's approach to learning. The school's vision is for every pupil, as a 'unique and precious' individual, to develop their particular capabilities. It is underpinned by I Corinthians 12:4: 'There are different gifts, but the same Spirit'. Pupils appreciate how 'we are all known, our gifts and our talents'. The focus on each child results in pupils making good progress across all year groups. A range of extra-curricular activities supports personal development. As part of its commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils, the school has recently agreed a definition of spirituality. School leaders rightly see this as the next step in increasing opportunities for spiritual development. Already, staff encourage pupils to stop for 'wow' moments to appreciate the birds singing or snow falling. Standards of behaviour are high. Policies relating to behaviour have recently been reviewed to reflect the school's values. It is too early yet for pupils to instinctively make the link between the values and their behaviour. Pupils feel safe in school because of the caring environment based on Christian values. Consequently, they enjoy school and attend regularly. The value of respect underpins the school's approach to diversity. Links with different schools, such as a culturally diverse school in Reading and schools abroad, strengthen pupils' appreciation of diversity. Pupils' understanding of the Christian church is enhanced by the relationship with the parish church. Through contact with a Baptist and an evangelical Anglican church, pupils are beginning to develop an awareness of variety within the Christian tradition. Their understanding of Christian diversity is further enhanced by the RE curriculum through, for example, culturally inspired depictions of Mary. School leaders have correctly identified the understanding of other cultures as an area for further development.

#### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Worship is carefully planned around the school's core Christian values reinforced by using the Bible as a key resource. For instance, pupils are able to link the parable of the Good Samaritan to the value of compassion. They recognise this sets a standard for their own behaviour. The school supports a number of charities, for example, Children in Need and the Air Ambulance. Issues covered in worship inspire pupils to take action. They have volunteered to donate their pocket money or collect food for a charity for the homeless. Links are made with the study of Christianity in RE. This enhances pupils' understanding of the centrality of Jesus's life and teaching in Christianity. Pupils and staff value the weekly worship led by the vicar because they find the message memorable. Recalling a church service, pupils were able to explain the Holy Trinity, 'they are all God but in different aspects'. Special services are held in the church to celebrate the Church year such as, at Christmas and Pentecost. Where appropriate, the service incorporates Holy Communion. These services help develop pupils' understanding of Anglican practice and key Christian beliefs. Worship provides opportunities for pupils to reflect on what the message means to them. For instance, on how God might 'use any one of us to do amazing things'. Pupils understand that prayer can take different forms. They give thanks to God by saying Grace before lunch. They ask God's help for people close to them and in the wider world. They write their own prayers and offer them up on the prayer board in their classroom. The new outdoor prayer space is seen as a natural extension of the prayer life of the school. Praying in this 'peaceful place makes me feel more relaxed so I forget about things I was worrying about'. Collective worship is monitored regularly by a foundation governor. Feedback is sought from parents and pupils. As a result of this, changes have been made to improve music and singing. The values ambassadors and older children regularly assist with worship. The school has identified the need to increase opportunities for child led worship. Pupils would welcome this responsibility.

#### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE enjoys a high status as a core subject. RE is effectively led by the headteacher and well resourced. It is taught weekly as a discrete subject by class teachers and the headteacher. The school has adopted the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education Scheme of Work which meets the

requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for Oxfordshire. Christianity is the majority religion studied. Pupils have a good knowledge of stories and events from the Bible. Pupils are encouraged to make links between Christianity and Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism, the other world religions studied. The extent to which teaching enables pupils' to make informed links between Christianity and the beliefs and practices of other religions varies. It depends on the depth of subject knowledge of the teacher. Visits to places of worship or visiting speakers as part of the planned curriculum is recognised by the school as an area for development. Effective teaching encourages pupils to reflect and make connections between their learning and their own lives and experiences. Skilled questioning by teachers deepens pupils' understanding and self-knowledge, for example, enabling pupils to realize they were stereotyping a paralysed person. When marking written work, teachers again extend pupils' thinking by probing, for instance, the link between Passover and Easter. In response, a pupil wrote of the Jews sacrificing a lamb 'to save themselves'. Jesus however, sacrificed himself 'to mend the connection the people of earth had with God'. Teaching in RE is monitored by the headteacher and a foundation governor. Feedback is provided to aid improvement. Pupils' work is also scrutinized and moderated with other schools locally. This confirms judgements about standards in RE. Pupil progress in RE is regularly tracked and monitored by governors. Most pupils work at or above age related expectations. Pupil outcomes are in line with or exceed those for other core subjects.

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

Since the headteacher has been in post, she has reinvigorated the school's understanding of itself as a Church school. An ethos committee has been created comprising governors and staff. The committee has been instrumental in reviewing the school's vision and introducing the core values. The values are inclusive, accessible to those of other faiths or none. All stakeholders were included in the review. The introduction of core Christian values has had a positive impact on the school's understanding of itself as a Christian community. There is a shared commitment to helping every pupil 'grow in mind, body and spirit'. Embedding values 'at the heart of the school' is identified as a strategic priority on the school's development plan. Effective monitoring has helped strengthen the established Christian character of the school. School leaders are systematically reviewing school policies to ensure they reflect the school values. Foci for development from the last inspection, including those relating to monitoring by governors, have been addressed. The headteacher leads on RE and collective worship herself to indicate the priority given to these areas. Statutory requirements for RE and worship are met. School leaders scrupulously track and monitor the progress of each pupil consistent with the school's Christian vision. Consequently, outcomes for pupils are good. The headteacher received helpful support from a diocesan link advisor following her appointment. The school and local church enjoy a strong and mutually fruitful partnership. The incumbent is an ex officio governor as well as leading worship weekly whilst the church uses the school buildings to host events. In addition, over half the children in the school volunteered to sing in the choir for the highly popular Christmas Eve Christingle service in church. Parents and carers provide strong support for the school. They contribute feedback on policies, collective worship and RE. Successful succession planning by governors has enabled two successive headteachers being appointed from internal candidates. Governors explore candidates' commitment to the Christian character of the school at interview ensuring newly appointed staff embrace the vision of the school.

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