

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Leafield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Member of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

The Green
Leafield
Witney
OX29 9NP

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	February 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Oxford Diocese Schools Trust
Date of inspection	13 June 2017
Date of last inspection	10 July 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	VC primary 143986
Headteacher	Christian McGuinness
Inspector's name and number	Lesley Turville 732

School context

Leafield is a small, rural primary school serving the villages of Leafield and Ascott-Under-Wychwood. It has 98 pupils on roll. In February 2017, the school became an academy as a member of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. The large majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national figure. The school enjoys close links with the Forest Edge Benefice and the Burford Partnership of ten schools. The Headteacher is currently chair of this group.

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

- The aspirational, inclusive Christian vision of the headteacher creates an atmosphere in which all adults and pupils feel nurtured and valued as individuals.
- A core set of Christian values are made explicit to all stakeholders through worship and linked Biblical stories and have a significant impact on the daily life of the school.
- Collective worship reflects the strong mutually beneficial relationship with the local church and reflects Anglican traditions and practices and the seasons of the church year.
- Excellent relationships across the whole community ensure that pupils feel safe and valued and develop as confident, articulate, thoughtful and responsible individuals who achieve well above national expectations.
- Governors support, challenge and monitor the Christian character of the school ensuring that it informs strategic planning.

Areas to improve

- To develop a whole school understanding of personal spirituality and use this to provide age appropriate experiences for pupils inside and outside of the classroom.
- To continue to develop staff and governors as effective leaders of a church school in a multi-academy trust through appropriate professional development and distributed leadership.

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

Leaffield Primary school provides a truly caring Christian learning environment where pupils flourish, make good progress and grow in confidence. This is because the headteacher has created an ethos where adults in the school and community also feel supported and valued as individuals. Thus, relationships across the school are excellent. Everyone articulates the importance of the core Christian values of honesty, hope, love, courage, respect and responsibility and how these shape the daily life of the school. Pupils talk about how values show them how to behave and enjoy their efforts being recognised through the 'Smile' awards and the 'Governors Cup'. These values also shape the curriculum which shows how embedded they have become since they were selected. Pupils are encouraged to show 'courage' in their learning using a 'can do' approach when they 'go into the learning pit' or explore the outside environment in forest schools. Some staff model honesty and courage by deliberately making mistakes and talking about how they can overcome them. All of this ensures that pupils feel safe and valued and develop as confident, articulate, thoughtful and responsible individuals who achieve well above national expectations. Furthermore, pupils enjoy school, attendance is high and behaviour is very good. All pupils are welcome and given the same opportunities. Staff willingly change the curriculum or daily routines to accommodate individual needs demonstrating Christian inclusion in action. This results in all groups of pupils making good progress across the school.

Cultural development is a strength of the school. Since the last inspection the school has taken part in the Comenius Project linking with schools from other countries around the world. More recently it has been recognised as a Global Learning Expert Centre meeting an area for development from the last report. This and the strong religious education (RE) curriculum which includes visits from people of different faiths and visits to a range of places of worship means pupils are aware of the global dimension of Christianity. They show a high degree of understanding and respect for diversity. Pupils enjoy RE and recognise the importance of knowing about the beliefs of others and being able to talk openly about their own. This was illustrated in an RE lesson observed where one pupil described how he prays using a rosary, something that a lot of the class were unfamiliar with. Pupils explore 'big questions' during lessons and are able to talk knowledgeable about what they have learnt. They identify similarities and differences and challenge stereotypes. They make links between their learning and their lives. Following a topic on Uganda one pupil in year one explained that she realised that she felt something she hadn't felt before. After a while she identified the feeling as 'anger'. This led to the class running a fundraising programme for Uganda developing an understanding of the idea of 'courageous advocacy' and making a difference in the world. The school council discusses charitable giving and pupils talk with pride about what they have done.

Pupils develop spiritually through music, arts, visits and a curriculum built upon discussion and reflection. However, the school does not have a well-developed interpretation of spirituality which is shared across the school. This means that, as yet, opportunities for personal spiritual development are not planned for or monitored across the school in the same way as other subjects.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

The impact of collective worship is key in creating the Christian ethos of the school. It sets the values within a Biblical context and clearly demonstrates the Christian foundation of the school through its emphasis on Church seasons and liturgical practices. Pupils are fully engaged in worship and respond by listening carefully, responding willingly, reflecting and praying reverently and singing beautifully. All members of the community attend worship times and parents enjoy attending services in the church. One parent described the impact of the new lantern procession and carol singing as 'upscaling the nativity and bringing it to the whole village'. Pupils say they enjoy worship and parents confirm that pupils bring the songs and prayers home with them. Pupils recognise the values as Christian in foundation because they know the Biblical stories that support them well and have spent time exploring what they mean to them in age appropriate ways. Staff are confident leading class acts of worship and appreciate the difference between this and the more formal larger acts of worship. One teacher explained that the small groups enabled all pupils to participate and express themselves in a way that wasn't possible in a larger group. Pupils explore how they make sense of the modern world and key events in the light of their Christian values and the teachings of Jesus. This leads to pupils wanting to serve each other and the wider community.

There is a close working relationship with the Forest Edge Benefice exemplified by the Easter Service held in Leaffield but attended by both Leaffield and Finstock schools. Revd. Paul is a regular visitor to the school, leading worship, teaching in some RE lessons and being available to answer questions about his own faith.

Acts of worship in the hall and in the classroom are planned to follow the same format giving a consistent pattern but a different experience. Worship includes symbols, artefacts and liturgy drawn from the Anglican traditions. Thus the pupils are comfortable when they attend the local church and have a very good understanding of the church seasons. Services in the church reflect the main festivals of the church year including Ash Wednesday, Ascension

Day and Pentecost. These themes, the symbol of the three-wicked candle and teaching in RE have given pupils a good understand of the Trinity. They explain each with reference to a part of the Bible. God the creator is seen in the creation narrative, Jesus in the Christmas story and the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Music is an essential part of worship and pupils enjoy singing and know a range of modern and more traditional songs by heart. They enter singing 'Here I am to Worship' which creates a special atmosphere and sets this time apart from the rest of the day. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and pray both formally using the school prayer and the 'Lord's Prayer' and informally using spontaneous prayer. Some pupils say they like to use school prayers at home to end the day. Special prayers are written for special occasions and show a great depth of knowledge and reflective thought. Pupils enjoy taking part in worship especially when they can lead or act but say they would like to plan and lead more often.

The headteacher is the collective worship leader and he ensures that monitoring and evaluation is rigorous and informative. Governors attend worship, monitor provision and challenge the school on its impact and feed back to the full governing body. Observations of class worship and whole school worship are undertaken and pupils are consulted through questionnaires and discussion. All this contributes to school action planning and ensure that practice is continually evolving and improving. It more than meets statutory requirements.

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

All stakeholders were involved in creating the school vision of 'Inspiring, Learning, Together', which reflects the strong family feel of the school and its physical and emotional position at the heart of the community. The core Christian values underpin the vision statement and illustrate how it is implemented fulfilling the strong non-negotiable aim to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Parents choose to send their children to this school because of its ethos and are delighted at the care and attention they receive both pastorally and academically. The geographical location of the church reflects the strong mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the church and the school. This relationship, which was always strong, has been further strengthened through the appointment of the current headteacher and his engagement with the church community. He demonstrates Christian leadership and is aspirational in his plans. He is ably supported by governors and middle leaders who share his vision to provide the best possible education for everyone within a clear Christian ethos. Thus, attainment and progress in the school is well above average. Governors know the school well and successfully challenge it to continue improving. The school development plan is partnered by the RE and collective worship action plans. These are reviewed regularly in the Raising Achievement Committee, monitored through visits to the school and form a part of all full governing body meetings. This level of scrutiny ensures that self-evaluation is accurate and informs strategic planning. Senior leaders recognise that more conversations with groups of pupils and parents would further support school self-evaluation. Areas for development from the last inspection have been met. Decisions are taken with the ethos of the school in mind. This is illustrated by the recent conversion to become an academy in the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust thus ensuring the Christian character of the school will be maintained.

The headteacher makes good use of existing partnerships with the Diocese, the ODST and the Burford group to ensure high quality continuing professional development for staff. Two newly appointed teachers received induction training from the Diocese and feel well supported in their new roles. Under the nurturing leadership of the headteacher staff feel motivated and empowered. The RE leader has successfully introduced the new Diocesan scheme of work and provides training and guidance for staff. 'Big' class books map curriculum coverage and careful assessment shows that levels of attainment are in line with other subjects reflecting good quality RE provision. However, a high proportion of this small staff are either new to their role or newly returned from maternity leave so staff development of teachers and middle leaders in a church school remains a priority. Governors also recognise the need for continued training as they become more familiar with being part of a large multi-academy trust.

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