



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

The Blake Church of England Primary School

Cogges Hill Road
Witney
Oxfordshire OX28 3FR

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: NA

Date of inspection: 30 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 18 October 2010

School's unique reference number: 141840

Headteacher: Timothy Edwards-Grundy

Inspector's name and number: The Revd Dr Jason Phillips 598

School context

The Blake is a large primary school of 414 pupils. It serves a catchment that has a varied social makeup but which is predominantly affluent. Most pupils are White British. The pupils represent various faiths including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam as well as families of no faith. The proportion of pupils with a special educational need is broadly average. The senior leadership team is newly appointed and a number of middle leaders are new in role. The school became an academy in March 2015 and joined the Oxford Diocese Multi-academy Trust (ODST).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of The Blake CE Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The inclusion of children of all faiths, social backgrounds, abilities and social need results in an accepting Christian community where children, governors and staff demonstrate compassion for others.
- The vibrant and engaging Christian leadership of the headteacher who models Christian values and secures good standards in religious education (RE) and an environment where children feel free to openly explore religious ideas and the mysteries of life and faith.
- The drive, commitment and Christian leadership of the governing body resulting in quality governance, succession planning and an outstanding all-round education for the pupils.
- The impact of a Christian values based curriculum results in children who can nuance judgements and decisions from an informed Christian perspective.
- The spiritual interconnection between art, RE and collective worship enables an effective contemporary approach that engages adults and children in a joyful spiritual journey.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that teaching and learning consistently challenges all pupils to achieve their potential in English, mathematics and RE so that attainment and progress are good in comparison to similar schools.
- Ensure that the leadership training of middle leaders is clearly from a church school perspective and that the school uses its expertise to support the development of church school leaders across the ODST.

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

This church school is exceptional in its ability to balance an explicit Christian vision with a caring, inclusive ethos where all pupils prosper. It is perfectly evident that Christian values are the wellspring of this church school expressed in service to the local community. Of this, they are justifiably proud. As one parent said, 'It is because it is secure in its identity that it can be inclusive of all.' As a result, the school is exemplary in the contribution it makes to the Church of England's mission to serve the nation. The school values clearly arise from a sound biblical underpinning that the school expresses in displays and documentation. The impact of the Christian values on all members of the school community is marked because they are lived and breathed in practice, policy, the curriculum and personal example. This results in highly positive relationships and behaviour that is strong. Attendance is in line with national figures. Where the anti-bullying policy is utilized, it is actioned sensitively with positive outcomes for all. The Christian values give the children a language to narrate their behaviour choices at school and at home. The school is also exemplary in its support of pupils with a learning or behavioural need and is indicative of the school's compassion and willingness to give pupils the best possible chance. One external agency said, 'The compassion shown in the children (at this school) is second-to-none and relationships with staff is one of trust.' The school's insistence on an inclusive Christian environment means that pupils demonstrate respect for others and develop a positive understanding of the diversity of modern Britain. The school has productive links with a school in Nigeria and the multi-cultural Christ-The-Sower School in Milton Keynes. These links give pupils a personalized understanding of diversity and a genuine empathy. The multicultural awareness represents significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils excel spiritually, socially and culturally through a Christian values based curriculum that give pupils wide opportunities to develop skills and talents. RE and the arts make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development inspiring them to explore both the tangible and the mysteries of life and faith. As a result, pupils can examine issues and contexts nuancing their understanding from a Christian values perspective. Most pupils make good progress in their studies including in RE. However, the progress for some pupils in English, Mathematics and RE is inconsistent, so these pupils do not achieve what they are capable of academically. However, the school has rigorous action plans in place to raise attainment that are already having a positive impact. The distinctly Christian learning environment of this school results in pupils with high self-esteem, that have a spiritual compass for life and who flourish in who they are and what they learn.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is a joyful time at The Blake and so inspires a vibrant expression of Christianity. Its contemporary relevance and inclusive nature supports pupils, staff and parents on a spiritual journey of their own. Collective worship is well-led and well-planned enabling it to be central to the daily rhythm and consciousness of the school. The parish priest helps shape planning so that it mirrors the Anglican liturgical year and the biblical lectionary used in St Mary's church in order that the whole worshipping community of the parish is in tandem. The school enhances pupils' understanding of the liturgical year through the celebration of festivals and by joining with the local Methodist Church in their Harvest, Easter and Pentecost Experience Days. Times of significance to other faiths such as Rosh Hashanah are also marked extending pupils' understanding of the sacred. The opportunity to consider baptism and confirmation in collective worship on an annual basis generally results in candidates for both. Collective worship explores Christian values in context helping to shape pupils' behaviour and decision-making. Pupils, especially the older ones, actively participate in, lead and evaluate collective worship resulting in a sense of ownership. However, pupils' understanding of the elements that comprise an act of worship is a relative weakness as the elements have not been considered sufficiently. Through collective worship, pupils gain an impressive understanding of the person of Christ because of regular biblical input. Similarly, pupils have a clear age-appropriate understanding of the Holy Spirit readily expressed in terms of the Fruits of the Spirit by pupils and staff alike. This is exemplified by artwork in the worship space of the hall too. An awareness of God as creator is evident and has a positive bearing upon the school's eco work. One child wrote of God, 'I am the love, the language of the heart.' Ongoing consideration of themes explored in collective worship is encouraged in a variety of ways such as the graffiti board where pupils can make comment. This is illustrated by recent comments on the nature of friendship. These opportunities extend the impact of collective worship and make it directly

relevant to pupils. Pupils value blessing, prayer and reflection because they are important to the school. The prayer spaces project provides opportunities and inspiration for pupils to engage creatively in prayer, enhancing their own spiritual journey. Governors monitor collective worship strategically and act upon evaluations securing positive outcomes.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

Pupils speak highly of RE as it engages and motivates them. It is a positive experience. Consequently most pupils make good progress. RE is not yet outstanding because some learning tasks do not adequately push all pupils to attain their potential. Outcomes show that, whilst teaching is solidly good, the proportion of outstanding teaching in RE is inconsistent limiting the attainment of some pupils. Teachers' tracking of attainment is careful and their marking of pupils' work is effective in that it often encourages further engagement with key ideas. This represents good progress since the last inspection. The best RE at the school inspires the pupils to explore issues and mysteries of faith such as the creation and the Creator. It develops a respectful attitude in school where pupils feel safe to express their ideas and doubts. Careful teaching and visits for example to Christ Church Cathedral and Oxford Synagogue ensure pupils have a good understanding of Christianity and Judaism. The strong focus on Christianity ensures pupils have a secure understanding of the faith that shapes the character of this school. Their understanding of faiths other than Christianity and Judaism is a relative weakness although pupils do develop some awareness of Islam and aspects of Indian faiths. A significant strength of RE is the combination of RE with the arts such as the impressive RE and art weeks that explore such themes as 'The Lord is my Shepherd.' This deepens pupils understanding and enjoyment of RE as well as expanding pupils' skills of communication, analysis and reflection. The school utilizes the locally agreed syllabus for RE to explore the big questions of life and faith and through which it meets statutory requirements. RE has a high profile in school and is led skilfully by the joint subject leads who encourage, challenge and support to ensure the subject is central to the Christian values based curriculum. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate RE effectively ensuring it is ever developing. The significant contribution of RE in this school is that it results in pupils who see faith as a positive force in the world even if they choose not to follow a religious tradition themselves.

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

The leadership of the school is intentionally distributive resulting in effective professional development of church school leaders. It establishes a commitment by all staff to the school's central Christian vision. The governors are determined and skilled in challenging, monitoring and supporting the school to attain positive outcomes for its pupils that arise from a strong Christian heart. Good progress on the action points of the last inspection is evident in the curriculum and ethos of the school with a positive impact upon pupils. Governors are skilled at strategic direction exemplified by the careful way in which the academy process was undertaken and the joining of the ODS to secure the school's long-term interests. The governors ensure that statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met and that they are vibrant, contemporary and inspiring experiences that influence pupils and staff for the good. RE is well- led by the joint leaders. Although this school is very much a shared venture, its success is promoted and exemplified by the exceptional and inspirational Christian leadership of the headteacher. The headteacher personifies the Christian values of the school and its inclusive and explicit Christian character. His giftedness in leadership inspires all in the school community to excellence. His leadership ensures the wellbeing of all children and staff. This openness and commitment to excellence results in positive relations with the ODS, the diocese more widely, other schools and the local church. Mutual links between St Mary's Church Cogges and the school are strong. The astute parish priest makes a commendable contribution to this church school pastorally and in governance. The school also make good use of visitors such as the Prime Minister and the Bishop of Dorchester to enhance pupils' appreciation of others and their place in the world. The links with the ODS are proving positive in driving up standards across all member schools including The Blake where progress has been inconsistent and not high enough at times for some pupils. The ODS is starting to provide opportunities to develop middle leaders beyond their Blake School experience. Parents speak positively of this school because they are consulted and involved and because their children excel socially and spiritually. They value this school because it affirms every person as a unique child of God whose calling is to be a gift to others in community.