

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Kirtlington Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	
Heyford Road Kirtlington Oxford OX5 3HL	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Date of inspection	29 January 2018
Date of last inspection	26 February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 123187
Headteacher	Louise Williams
Inspector's name and number	Jacque Coles 840

School context

Kirtlington School is a much smaller than average primary school. Most of the pupils live in the village. Almost all pupils are from White British or other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are in receipt of pupil premium funding, is well below national average. There have been significant changes in leadership, staffing and governors since the last inspection. The current head teacher was appointed in September 2015.

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

- The extremely effective leadership including governors have made a successful school improvement journey over the last two years which has enabled rapid improvements and restored the Christian foundation of the school.
- Deeply embedded Christian values enable pupils to grow into confident and thoughtful individuals.
- The strong and positive Christian ethos has restored strong relationships both within its own community and within the village, putting the school back at the heart of the local community.
- The strong partnership and excellent teamwork with the church creates a wide resource of people to support the mission of the school.

Areas to improve

- Use the Understanding Christianity resource to increase pupils' religious literacy and further raise levels of attainment in religious education (RE).
- Increase opportunities for pupils to plan and lead acts of worship so that by taking greater ownership, they develop as spiritual leaders.
- Review the collective worship and RE policies in line with national guidance to ensure that statutory requirements are clear and continue to be met

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

Since the headteacher has been in post, the Christian character of the school has been significantly raised by being strategically built into a strong framework. Clearly defined Christian values are successfully woven and deeply embedded into the life and fabric of the school. The five values, integrity, individuality, friendship, resilience and aspiration, enable pupils to grow into confident and caring individuals. A Christian value is linked to a school value each term and pupils are asked to discuss at home how it can be incorporated into their lives. A parent said that they found these conversations fascinating and inspiring. A pupil shared that in discussing the value of friendship it had challenged them to say thank you more and to appreciate what others do. Another pupil commented that they realised that not everyone has a life of privilege. The school motto 'Aspire, Achieve Altogether' creates a purposeful foundation on which school life is based. The high level of care and respect for one other is embodied in the quality of relationships and the kind and inclusive way members of the school community treat each other. Older pupils enjoy supporting younger ones. Pupil behaviour is excellent and there are no concerns about bullying. Pupils achieve well. A parent said, 'I know my child is challenged here', with another saying, 'Staff are really good at capturing the pupils' imagination for learning'. Pupils at Kirtlington want to come to school. Attendance statistics are above national, with care, concern and support offered to any families in difficult situations.

RE has a high profile and contributes effectively towards the spiritual and moral development of its pupils. Due to the enthusiasm of the subject leader, RE plays a major role in determining both the Christian character of the school and furthering pupils' knowledge and understanding of other faiths. RE challenges pupils and deepens their spiritual development. Staff create learning experiences so pupils can express their thoughts and explain their thinking. Pupils enjoy discovering what they and others think and believe. The school, despite having mostly White British pupils, effectively develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity and other faiths through its structured programme of visits and visitors. Pupils also learn about other cultures through links with their partner school in Dikidikana, South Africa. The school recognises the need to develop pupils' understanding of Christianity across the world so that pupils can gain an appreciation of the diversity within the world-wide church.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship at Kirtlington is an opportunity for pupils and staff to come together to learn, reflect, pray and share thoughts with one another and with God. An important focus is placed on the daily act of worship where relevant Bible passages are shared and insights given into the lives of different Bible characters. Pupils listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to questions. They show engagement and contemplation. Through the telling of Bible stories, pupils are able to recall some of the teachings of Jesus and key messages. There is clear evidence of pupils' spiritual development. There are times for reflection or prayer throughout the day. Opportunities include the use of classroom reflection areas and times to pray for any concerns, personally, locally and globally. A pupil said how it made them realise that they can pray at any time and in any place. Other pupils say they value time out of a busy day to take some quiet time to think. 'It's where we can hand over any worries,' says one. Pupils enjoy the challenge questions given by the headteacher which prompts a rush to look for a Bible to see if they can locate a verse or further their knowledge by researching a topic. Actions are given to Bible verses to help pupils remember them and these are related to the values they are learning about and discussing both at school and at home. Pupils have opportunities to write and contribute prayers linked to the school's values. The school has addressed the focus for development from the last inspection to increase pupils' active participation in collective worship. Pupils are beginning to be given some opportunities for spontaneous prayer. However, they say they would like to be given greater responsibility for planning and leading worship, including in the termly church services.

The improvement of the hall environment supports an ethos for worship, with an inspiring tree of values and a three wick candle representing the Trinity. Coloured altar cloths aid pupils' understanding of the seasons of the church year. Pupils enjoy using words of liturgy as part of their worship. They have a clear understanding of different Christian festivals. School church services and celebration assemblies as part of worship are well attended and supported by parents who report how much they enjoy these acts of worship. A helpful church team give excellent levels of support in the planning of collective worship provision, incorporating teaching on the school's values alongside the Christian calendar. This enables a clear focus on each term's Christian value based on Biblical teaching and helps pupils to gain a deeper understanding of how these values can be applied to their own lives. Pupils have a secure understanding of the central position of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith and God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The collective worship policy requires review however, to ensure it reflects the school's practice in worship. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship takes place with feedback from different members of the school community. This has led to the development of practice with a range of formats, settings and experiences used to foster opportunities for worship. The smaller size worship enables pupils to explore Christian values in more depth at a level appropriate to their age. Pupils delight in and appreciate the annual prayer space event organised by one of the church members. 'It's really helpful,' said one pupil. 'It taught me that I can forgive and forget.' Pupils enjoy

opportunities to support charities and take initiatives in social action. They are able to find out about each charity and see its work in action. This well thought through approach not only enables those within the school community to demonstrate their Christian values to others less fortunate than themselves, but also develops their understanding of diverse communities. Support for acts of collective worship are mainly from within the Anglican church, but leaders are actively seeking support from other Christian traditions to deepen the pupils' experience and understanding of the richness within Christianity.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

There has been a clearly focused improvement journey which has increased the profile and level of staff accountability for RE. RE has a high visible presence with creative displays which challenge pupils' thinking. The subject leader has applied valuable learning from training and cascaded this to other staff, monitoring its effectiveness carefully on the quality of teaching and learning. With supportive and collaborative teamwork, staff confidence and competence has grown. Termly meetings between the subject leader and RE governor enable provision to be established in line with current developments in RE. Effective teaching strategies have been successfully introduced to raise attainment so it is at least in line with other core subjects. Lessons enable pupils to be actively involved in learning about and learning from Christianity through a journey of enquiry, discussion and reflection. Pupils enjoy RE and say that it makes them think about the choices they make both at school and at home. Teachers' marking encourages pupils to consider their next step and challenges them deeper in their thinking. Teaching in RE is good and assessment ensures pupils' progress is good, particularly set against the background that many families are not from church backgrounds. These changes in RE have enabled increased engagement and enjoyment for the pupils. Although provision meets with the national statement of entitlement, the RE policy should be reviewed and clear identification of how the school meets statutory requirements should be written into it for all stakeholders to see and understand. This will ensure a high profile for RE is maintained into the future and its full impact is secured longer term. Since the last inspection, an excellent programme for visits and visitors in RE has been put into place to deepen pupils' awareness and knowledge of other faiths and places of worship. Previous development areas relating to RE have been addressed. Integration of the new national Understanding Christianity resource has started. Full implementation of this will enable pupils to have a stronger baseline of knowledge on which to apply the enquiry skills which are well developed. The RE leader is ambitious in her vision for further improvement, and together with the effective team of governors and resource of church members, this should secure higher levels of attainment for the pupils.

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

Despite significant changes in leadership and staffing since the last inspection, the headteacher and governors have transformed the school community's understanding of what it is to be a church school. The headteacher's energising momentum has successfully led all members through an important and strategic improvement journey. The vocalisation of a Christian vision is now clear and the profile of distinctive Christian values significantly raised. This considerably impacts the ethos and learning environment found at Kirtlington. A clear structure of evaluation and action enables effective progress in both collective worship and RE, with feedback incorporated from all members of the school community. Leaders have a clear grasp of the next steps and an enthusiasm to press on with these, to ensure that the school continues to flourish. The enthusiastic RE leader drives improvements in provision, to ensure positive progress. Effective monitoring enables a clear pathway of improvement to continue to emerge. Parent support is convincing and unwavering. They are very confident of the leadership and are extremely positive about the ethos, provision and behaviour of the pupils. Excellent, effective relationships exist between both, pupils and adults, the school, the church and its local community. There is a great sense of being a team amongst the staff and leadership is well distributed. Staff are united in their passion to move the school forwards. Subject leaders are challenged by governors to ensure a Christian distinctiveness in their area of work so that the whole curriculum is informed by a distinctive Christian vision. Working within a church school is part of the recruitment, induction and performance management cycle, with all staff supported to understand and proactively support its Christian ethos and values. This ensures strong succession planning to sustain the school's impact as a church school into the future. Both collective worship and RE meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors commend the support from the diocese and describe how this has impacted on practice. Staff development is enthusiastically championed by the headteacher, who will challenge with care and a high level of diligence, any weaker areas of practice. Leaders and governors have raised the school's public image, with an improved and attractive website which confidently sets its Christian character in context. Strong partnerships with the church provide a rich resource for the school and its pupils. The school proactively supports the local community, hosting events and inviting members of the community, thereby stimulating excellent links which are of mutual benefit.