



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### St. Christopher's Church of England Primary School

Temple Road  
Cowley  
Oxford  
OX4 2HB

**Previous SIAS grade: Satisfactory (VC)**

**Current SIAMS inspection grade: Good (Academy)**

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 6 July 2015

Date of last inspection: 21 June 2010 (VC)

School's unique reference number: 140556

Acting headteacher: Sheenagh Broadbent

Inspector's name and number: Allyson Taylor 768

#### School context

St. Christopher's Church of England School is a large primary school serving a very diverse, multi-cultural community in Oxford. There are 444 learners on roll in the school and nursery. The proportion of learners with additional needs is above that seen nationally. On starting school the majority of learners have lower starting points than their peers. The school converted to an academy in the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust in February 2014. An acting headteacher has been in post since September 2014.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St. Christopher's as a Church of England school are good

- The school's values, based on biblical texts, ensure positive relationships across all the ages and different cultures within the school community.
- The acting headteacher's dedicated leadership which has improved the Christian character of the school so that all adults and children feel valued and able to learn.
- The gifted leadership of religious education (RE) gives learners a secure sense of their place in our multi-cultural world.

#### Areas to improve

- Establish formal systems for governors to monitor and evaluate Christian distinctiveness, RE and collective worship so that this leads to improvements.
- Extend learners' role in independently planning and leading worship to increase the range of styles of worship and the engagement of all ages.
- Create a definition of spirituality to enable staff to plan regular and deeper spiritual development.

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

St. Christopher's school is motivated by three core values of love, courage and belonging. While these are linked to examples in the Christian Bible, learners also know they are found in the holy books of other faiths and so are understood to relate to all members of the school community. One learner commented that 'the values come from our hearts.' The appreciation of and delight in the rich range of cultures, faiths and backgrounds seen at St. Christopher's leads to a climate of mutual respect. All members of staff strive to meet the wide needs of learners and families, particularly those who are more vulnerable. The Christian values underpin the improved academic achievement. Results in national tests remain below national expectations. They have, however, improved considerably over three years and data for all ages shows rapid progress is now made from individual starting points. It is clear that staff go the extra mile to help learners, for example running an 'Easter school' to keep momentum in learning going before national tests. Several members of staff stated 'we have a duty to remove barriers to learning.' This is seen in the school's efforts to build trusting relationships with parents and in the way good attendance is promoted. There are wider effects of the values seen in the shared sense of belonging and mutual support expressed by staff. They explain how the values help them to: 'feel united, to provide a safe haven for many and to work with families to build each child as a whole.' As a highly inclusive school, St Christopher's welcomes families and children, many with considerable additional needs. RE plays an important role in meeting these needs as it builds a sense of acceptance and community. Learners enjoy learning about different faiths and state they would like to find out about faiths beyond those already explored. They say that RE helps them to think about who they want to be. The Christian character of the school is seen in action in the support for community and charity activities. As such, the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners. The school does not yet have a definition of spirituality which is understood by most adults. This restricts teachers from planning for deeper spiritual development through RE and the wider curriculum.

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

Worship strengthens the Christian foundation of the school. It is planned to support the school's chosen values through the teachings of the Bible and to mark special times for the Christian and other faiths. In exploring the values and themes relevant to the different backgrounds of learners, collective worship has a positive impact on the relationships between adults and learners. Much collective worship is based on Bible stories which learners enjoy acting out and responding to by asking and answering questions. They sing with gusto, reflecting the musical expertise of key staff. Adults and children appreciate the daily opportunities for reflection and prayer in worship. In fact, learners express a wish to have a longer time to reflect and to play a more regular and active role in leading worship. They state that times of quiet help them to feel an inner peace and to feel at peace with each other. They also mention they would like leaders from other faith communities to lead worship and this is something the school pursues but has yet to achieve. The prayer life of the school includes the Lord's Prayer and a school prayer which captures the chosen values as understood by all members of the school community. In opening with 'Almighty God' this prayer demonstrates the sensitive and inclusive way the school reflects both its Christian heritage and its multi-faith community. The use of prayers written by learners also supports spiritual development. At present, not all classes have the opportunity to pray together at home time. Local clergy and members of local faith communities make a valuable contribution to whole school worship, particularly the 'Open the Book' group and Baptist minister. They enable learners to have an understanding of some Anglican traditions in worship, including the Christian belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Worship is led by senior staff and local clergy and is planned by the acting headteacher with support from clergy and other staff. The regular support of local clergy is especially important as the size of the school and distance from both Anglican parish churches hinders the school from visiting them regularly for services. The main Christian festivals are, therefore, celebrated in school. Recent questionnaires have offered learners the opportunity to feedback their views of worship. Governors attend worship and their role in monitoring provision is conducted informally.

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

The school is blessed in the committed leadership of the acting headteacher whose actions are underpinned by Christian principles. It is due to her consistent drive, supported by loyal staff and governors that the Christian character of St. Christopher's has developed considerably since the last inspection. The shared vision of learning and growing together is underpinned by values which governors describe as embracing the message of Jesus with encouragement for all faiths. While leaders describe the values as distinctively Christian in origin, this is not consistently expressed as such in key policies and documents. All leaders describe the positive impact of the chosen values on the personal development and well-being of learners. They are able to discuss how the values also support achievement. Difficult decisions around staffing have been made in the spirit of the values, with courage and love to improve the experience of all who work and learn at the school. Members of staff say they feel valued and that they now work as a more harmonious team. Governors have responded to the challenges of raising academic standards by appointing key support and teaching staff to engage with families and help them to support their children. Above all, the rise in attendance is a tribute to all staff and leaders. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance data and are rightly focused on working with school improvement staff from the trust to ensure expected academic progress is secured. School development planning mentions leaders' commitment to embed the shared vision. Governors are very supportive and at this time monitor elements of the Christian character informally, through observation and discussion. They contribute to school self-evaluation. Their conclusions are not yet linked to development plans to improve the Christian character of St. Christopher's as a church school. Leaders ensure that provision for RE and worship reflect the core values and meet statutory requirements. RE contributes to the good behaviour and attitudes to learning seen across the school. The enthusiastic and highly skilled RE leader is very well supported in fulfilling her role. She accesses diocesan support and this enables her to provide excellent guidance for colleagues. Leaders support staff development and as such are mindful of nurturing the future leaders of church schools. As part of the diocesan trust, there are potential opportunities for leaders to share good practice across other trust schools. Parents and family members hold staff and leaders in high regard. They say that their children feel that school is like home. They also express a strong view that 'the school is on the up.' Partnerships with many families have improved and are set to improve further with the appointment of a new learning mentor. This is testament to the good leadership of the school as a distinctive and effective Church school. St. Christopher's is a school where all belong, and where adults and learners have the courage to love, grow and learn.

SIAMS report July 2015 St. Christopher's Primary School, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HB