



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

### **Chesterton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Alchester Road  
Chesterton  
Oxfordshire  
OX26 1UN

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 3 December 2013

Date of last inspection: 10 November 2009

School's unique reference number: 123101

Headteacher: Mrs Victoria Woods

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

#### **School context**

Chesterton is a small, rural primary school, serving the village of Chesterton on the outskirts of Bicester. Currently, there are 129 pupils on roll, who are mainly from a White British background. A small number of children are eligible for free school meals or have a parent serving in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. Recently there have been significant changes in the teaching staff and the governing body. The headteacher has been in post since January 2012. The parish church of St Mary's is within walking distance of the school.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Chesterton as a Church of England school are good**

- The strong sense of a Christian family community, embraced by all.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils, who become confident learners and are encouraged to achieve their best within a supportive Christian environment.
- Flourishing partnerships between church, school and village communities.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Involve pupils and governors in the evaluation of collective worship to ensure best quality worship at all times.
- Embed a systematic method for governors to evaluate church school effectiveness in order to better understand the impact of Christian values on pupils' learning and progress.
- Embed assessment procedures in RE, ensuring pupils have the opportunity to evaluate their work so that accurate analysis of progress and standards can be made.

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

Chesterton Primary School provides a good learning environment where pupils are proud to belong and are challenged to succeed. Good attendance is effectively promoted to aid effective learning and responsibility. Attendance is consistently above the national average, with the daily breakfast club supporting working parents. Indeed, Chesterton has a reputation for being supportive and nurturing of individuals and it is evident that the school is clearly sharing its understanding of its Christian ethos, with the result that the effects of respect and integrity are seen throughout the school. Positive learning experiences take place. A good example is when staff ensure all children regardless of additional needs are able to participate in school residential, with staff going the extra mile to enable this to happen. Achievement shows an improving picture, with targets to accelerate progress, indicating that all pupils are making good progress, with some making outstanding progress and achieving Level 5 and 6 in numeracy and literacy when they complete their primary schooling. Pupils value their teachers and their friends and the range of experiences offered to them, such as singing in the school choir. Pupil achievement is rewarded with a certificate and tea with the headteacher, which parents value as a positive way to recognise achievement. Parents speak highly of 'the understanding attitude reflected in this church school where the values of respect and integrity and other core values are integral to school life'. They also feel that they and their children are well supported and are well nurtured, with independence promoted throughout, with personalised homework in upper school. Pupils' cultural and global awareness is enhanced through learning about other faiths and cultures in similar and diverse communities, not just in RE but as part of the school's cross curricular work. Parents particularly praised the school's support through bereavements and illness, speaking of the school's 'close-knittedness'. Colourful displays around school support pupils' spiritual development. The school grounds also enhance pupils' spirituality and offer the opportunity to reflect as well as deepen their awareness of God's creation.

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

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is good because the experiences offered to them in worship are making a real difference in their lives and contributing to their spiritual development. A hallmark of collective worship at Chesterton is that the school comes together as a respectful congregation, with adults and children sitting together where all are encouraged to 'draw near with faith'. They welcome and commune with one another, as happens in church. Pupils say that when they acknowledge 'God is love' at the start of worship it 'helps to quieten us down' and they are able to 'find their place of stillness'. They appreciate going down to church and lighting a candle there which 'helps to remind us that God is with us'. Pupils speak of when The Holy Spirit 'came down to the disciples to help them carry on the message of God the Son and help people to be good'. There is great support from the rector and associate priest in the Akeman benefice, who are both regular and welcome visitors to school. Key festivals are celebrated in St Mary's Church. Pupils speak of the importance of forgiveness as 'having a second chance' when praying The Lord's Prayer. They enjoy writing their own prayers about peace and life, showing the importance of prayer in the life of this school. Pupils speak with knowledge about the cycle of the church year, noting Advent is about 'Jesus' coming into the world'. Pupils are able to reflect on how an expectant Mary might have felt whilst 'hot seating' a pregnant teaching assistant during worship, saying they 'learn best when we have an example, not just learning from a story, really connecting and getting engaged'. Adults and pupils have the opportunity to plan and lead class or whole school worship; with adults, including parents giving feedback on the understanding, depth and relevance of school worship. Pupils welcome the opportunity to share their thoughts on worship with governors, ensuring quality and integrity at all times.

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

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school where RE has a growing importance. It has been led by a senior teacher since September. As a result, the leadership and management of RE is now in a stronger position. However, the leadership of this key subject is still in its early stages. Teaching and learning is generally good but is sometimes satisfactory. Assessment tracking takes place four times a year as is the pattern in numeracy and literacy. This means that over the course of a year each child is levelled once, in comparison with their expected capability to work at their specific level. There had been no moderation or assessment of performance or progress in place before this. Therefore, assessment is still in its infancy and is not yet embedded, with the result that it is too early to have made a significant impact on pupil progress and attainment. Evidence so far shows that some children are achieving Level 5 in RE. Pupils acquire knowledge of Christianity over time. Pupils' attitudes are positive to learning about other faith traditions such as Judaism and Hinduism. Pupils know how to improve their work and speak positively of how RE enables them to ask and answer puzzling questions in very creative ways through WOW days. For example, pupils in lower school are able to explore elements of challenge in the story of Saul on the Damascus road, by asking, 'Does Jesus have the power to change people's lives today?' In upper school, pupils are enthusiastically able to discover the mysterious message in the burning bush on the school field, They speak of 'finding a smouldering bush with a scroll inside with a message from God'. Such activities enable them to reflect creatively on the different ways God sends messages to people, such as through 'a burning bush as God wanted Moses to believe in him'; acknowledging that 'Jesus was the last message'. Pupils welcome discussing these deep questions of faith with the clergy.

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

The school's Christian heritage is embraced by the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff so Chesterton's Church of England foundation is celebrated and secured. Good relationships show the key role that Christian values play in the life of the school. Parents praise the good foundation which Chesterton provides. Foundation governors, including those who are new to post, are committed to the life and work of the school and are open to new ways of helping the school move forward. They recognise the need for church school distinctiveness to be a standing item on every governing body agenda so that its profile, action and progression, in order to enhance pupils' learning, is regularly and robustly raised with the whole governing body. However, this is not yet fully realised. The school's shared vision lives through the school's values, rules, expectations, celebrations and worship. RE is now monitored in the same way as other core subjects. The school has identified key priorities for development, such as embedding the assessment of RE. There is renewed vision and impetus to carry this forward as part of the school's ongoing journey. Governors appoint teachers, providing them with opportunities to develop their roles and responsibilities. The school values support from the diocese for staff and governor development. Already the results of this training are beginning to make a difference to policy and practice in worship and RE. Pupils have a voice through the school council. The school's website is used well by parents and the wider community to communicate important events in its life.

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