

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Uffington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Broad Street, Uffington, Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 7RA

Current SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Diocese

Oxford

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Good

Local authority

Oxfordshire

Date of inspection

4 May 2017

Date of last inspection

June 2012

Type of school and unique reference number

VC Primary 123170

Headteacher

Lisa Bradbury

Inspector's name and number

Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Currently there are 117 pupils on roll in this rural village primary school. The school is predominately White British, with pupils coming from the local villages and some coming from out of catchment. This includes a few pupils from HM Armed Forces families. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. There have been significant staffing changes, with eight new staff in post from the start of the Autumn term. The headteacher was appointed in September 2016 and is also the RE subject leader.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Uffington as a Church of England school are good

- This is a warm and welcoming Christian community where everyone lives out the school's core values of respect, love and perseverance, linking them to biblical teaching.
- There is a mutual and substantial partnership between church, school and village, notably through the vicar and St Mary's ministry team and the headteacher. This enables the Christian character of the school to shine through and enriches the worshipping life of the school.
- Pastoral support is rooted in a genuine Christian love to serve the individual needs of pupils and their families. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and achieve well, both academically and personally.

Areas to improve

- Enable pupils to grow in their leadership roles in planning, leading and evaluating collective worship to enrich their experience of worship in a church school.
- Extend governor monitoring in religious education [RE] so that this key subject is evaluated more regularly and rigorously as an important aspect of Christian distinctiveness.
- Deepen pupils' encounter with people of different faiths to enrich their spiritual and cultural development.

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

This warm and welcoming Christian community truly lives out its core values of respect, trust and perseverance. Each value is clearly linked to biblical teaching which pupils, parents and staff readily articulate. For example, perseverance is connected to Noah's ark, trust to Moses and the parting of The Red Sea and respect associated with the story of The Good Samaritan. Excellent pastoral support, serving the individual needs of pupils and their families, enables pupils to grow in confidence and achieve well. Consequently, progress is good for all groups of pupils, with many achieving expectations above the national average. Pupils clearly take perseverance on board 'when things get tough'. It pervades this community and is taken to heart as part of belonging to this family. As a result, pupils feel respected and listened to within a spirit of trust. Relationships are excellent and attendance is above the national average. The new behaviour policy was written by the assistant headteacher with members of the school council, reflecting the school's values. Behaviour is good, with the school taking the approach that a person is loved the most when they deserve it the least, resulting in parents who are very grateful for the policies in place. The headteacher firmly believes that holding fast to that which is good and showing genuine love and individual care for everyone who is part of this school makes a difference. There is compassion for pupils, parents and staff within a context of shared human understanding of experiences. Strategies, such as 'growth mindset', encourage pupils to take risks in their learning and become more confident to move forward. In addition, the staff have been taught to undertake diagnostic learning approaches. This takes place through learning walks, ensuring progress is on every staff meeting agenda and lesson observations are valuing all members of staff, including teaching assistants. As a result, pupils are nurtured and focussed interventions provided where needed within a supportive environment. For example, the work with those pupils who have special educational needs or who are from families serving with HM Armed Forces. Person centred approaches through the home school link worker support any families in need. Charity fundraising activities help pupils' awareness of diverse communities. Multicultural days, such as working with a visitor from Oxfam and Wayland's Arabian banquet also help pupils to make global connections. The school works hard to provide an inspiring and rich curriculum so pupils understand their place in the world. A recent example includes a visiting rabbi. Pupils are excited and challenged by RE, addressing a different big question each term, such as, 'Does God communicate with man?' and 'Does God answer prayer?' Reflection books capture personal reflections in RE, with learning journeys celebrating achievement pupils are proud of. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 are given a Bible to encourage greater depth in enquiry and biblical knowledge. Consequently, Uffington pupils are praised for being religiously literate. For example, they explain incarnation in their own words, saying, 'God created himself as a human to deliver his message. The human was called Jesus. The baby was not Joseph's son, but was the son of God and a blessing.' Pupils say they do enjoy RE 'and the philosophical parts as we like to be challenged on quotes from the old testament and what it means'. They can give a detailed account of the Christian story of salvation, commenting that, 'When Jesus was a man he worked for God and he told people to be nice and behave well. He sacrificed himself so we could live. He rose again as God loved him so much.' Pupils go on to describe Ascension and Pentecost when Jesus 'went up to heaven and gave the disciples all the languages in the world so they could speak of God.' They also like learning about values which Muslims and Hindus have and say they find it 'fascinating to learn about their beliefs'. Some pupils said they 'learned the hardest word to say was sorry after the rabbi's visit'. Whilst the school recognises that they excel at learning about Christianity as a worldwide faith, they have already identified deepening pupils' encounter with people of other faiths and visiting other places of worship as part of their raising achievement plan. They acknowledge the need to work together with other schools to meet this need.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The headteacher feels very proud of how worship at Uffington has developed since September 2016, with staff engaging and joining in the worship offered. Pupils say they enjoy 'having the whole school come together' and they see the church as 'a holy place as house of God'. Indeed, the partnership between church and school through the vicar and the ministry team enriches the worshipping life of the community.

For example, the vicar or member of the ministry team leads weekly worship and a member of the ministry team leads worship for the youngest children each week. Prayer features strongly, with The Lord's Prayer and other prayers used regularly. This includes pupils' prayers on the prayer tree, reflecting their concerns for 'peace in the Middle East' and teaching about the wider world. The school is on a journey with pupils now leading prayers and planning celebratory collective worship with the staff. Worship also takes place outside to help pupils understand Trinity and God's creation. Pupils say they would like to help design the new prayer garden. In addition, three trinity candles are lit at the start of worship and work on Pentecost is an important part of the worship journey, keeping everyone on the right path in understanding the pattern of the church year. Consequently, pupils can speak of a model of different ways of being God. They explain, 'God is a powerful person, he watches over us and keeps us safe. Jesus is the human replica of God. We can't see God. When Jesus came we could talk to him and interact. We can talk to God now in prayer.' Pupils use their Bibles and say some of their favourite Bible stories include the calming of the storm and David and Goliath as these show examples of perseverance and trust. Key times in the church year are marked, such as Palm Sunday when a real donkey is used by pupils re-enacting Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Families from HM Armed Forces say they feel welcome and included in this Christian family community when the school lay wreaths at the village war memorial. Pupils are now involved in the choosing of themes for worship, with governors attending worship and carrying out some monitoring. The school has already identified the need to enable pupils to grow in their leadership roles of planning, leading and evaluating worship and say they would welcome more evaluation from adults in the community too.

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

Strong leadership exists at all levels, with governors responsible for different aspects of the raising achievement plan [RAP], underpinned by core values. Everyone articulates the school's vision and values which are 'so engrained, we just connect and don't need to think about it'. Indeed, parents say, 'our children tell us you've got to persevere as it really resonates with them that they don't have to be perfect.' Governors bring their own expertise to the data and the RAP, including their knowledge of special educational needs Whilst they have addressed areas from the previous inspection; they acknowledge the need to monitor RE more regularly and rigorously. In this rural school, there are small cohorts, but everyone is making progress, including vulnerable groups so academic and personal progress presents a very positive picture. The headteacher is new to her role from September and is leading the school's development, including the RE, for her staff. Being a distinctive and inclusive community remains a challenge, but Uffington have come a long way in a short time, ensuring faith still has relevance for today. Consequently both RE and worship meet statutory requirements and RE has a high profile and is seen as an academic subject with dedicated time. Moreover, the headteacher affirms that RE is 'central to who we are'. For example, RE is also part of the homework cycle which addresses places, people, religion, values and culture. She attends diocesan training and works with staff and governors to ensure the school is constantly examining challenging moral questions. There is a good relationship with Springline, the local cluster of schools. Church, school and village come together for key events in the community, such as St George's Day and Remembrance-tide, with carol singing at the village hall and events such as 'Hosanna Rock' in church. Parents say the vicar is personable and his approachable manner enables pupils to relate to him. In addition, this breaks down the barriers of going to church for adults and pupils alike. Parents speak highly that each child knows and cares for other children. They praise the home school link worker who is in school every Friday. Parents say the school is so approachable and nothing is too much trouble. Genuine love and care, within a completely inclusive, warm friendly, safe environment engenders confidence and independence in their children to make it to the next stage of their education. They speak highly of the headteacher who instils a sense of fun in the children and has turned the school around since she has been here. They comment, 'it's amazing and so important to involve the community all together. The genuine love and care that all have for each other includes the staff, who get on genuinely as friends, not just colleagues. The different faiths teach me what I don't know.' Staff value the respect here, saying, 'we have different thoughts and persevere to do the best we can for the pupils. Our care goes further than education and we aim to help them in every aspect of their lives. Times of reflection are shared by all faiths and none. All are part of the Uffington family and we share in our joys and sorrows, making it a lovey place to be.'

