

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Christ Church Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Common Chorleywood Herts WD3 5SG

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 11th October 2012

Date of last inspection: September 2007

School's unique reference number: 117561

Headteacher: Duncan Gauld

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby 137

School context

Christ Church is an average sized primary school, located next to the parish church and the common, in a socially advantaged area. Almost all pupils are White British, with a small number from other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection a new headteacher was appointed in 2010.

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

The Christian distinctiveness of this school is recognised by the whole community. This results in a learning environment where children are nurtured to develop academically and personally, embraced by Christian love, care and respect.

Established strengths

- The commitment of the headteacher and governors in maintaining the ethos of the school
- The understanding of the distinctive Christian ethos by the whole school community and the resulting relationships between adults and children
- The impact of the ethos on the academic and personal development of all pupils
- The strong links and support between school and church communities

Focus for development

- Explore the ethos of the school in terms of specific Christian values to inform formal evaluation and strategic planning

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

The school has a powerful Christian ethos that drives the whole school, reiterating the very close spiritual and physical links with the adjacent church. The school logo with school superimposed onto the church vividly illustrates these links. Christian love, care and respect are evident in the excellent relationships between adults and children. The family feel of the school is nurtured through family groupings of children. These are used in a variety of school activities including worship, orienteering (sporting activities) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Younger children receive support whilst older pupils share responsibility and nurturing through these groupings. Pupils are articulate and show confidence and maturity that result in their sense of joy in learning. They also share a sense of humour. They readily identify a range of Christian values that make the school a distinctive church school. Christian values inform the code of conduct that children adhere to. The resulting good behaviour mirrors their positive attitude to learning. The high expectations of staff, underpinned by challenge and support, result in high achievement in the academic and personal development of all pupils. Pupils readily describe how they can ask for support when necessary. They are encouraged by a range of rewards that are celebrated in a variety of ways. They leave notes in 'the headteacher's listening box' knowing that sensitive issues will be addressed. The Christian character of the school is communicated in displays and actions. Each classroom has a prayer corner and the current value of the week displayed and pupils make regular contributions to these. Throughout the school there are displays of religious education work. Pupils suggest and support a number of national and international charities, including a project to send Bibles to Papua New Guinea. The mission of the church and service in the community has a high profile in the life of the school. The children's worker, youth worker and other team members are frequent visitors in school, leading the Bible club, joining the school on residential visits and furthering the spiritual development of pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship is central to celebrating the Christian life of the school and has continued to develop since the previous inspection. Weekly values, shared with the whole school community, are related to termly themes and are explored in a range of worship formats. All staff are involved in the planning and delivery of worship. The regular inputs by the vicar and the children's and youth workers from church reinforce the sense of belonging to a wider worshipping community. Opportunities for reflection and discussion during the day enable pupils to consider the impact of values. Children value worship as a time 'to come together, learn and talk to God.' They recognise the special time of worship by their quiet entry whilst listening to music. Pupils lead class and house worship and have a clear understanding of the importance and types of prayer using theological language. Having introduced prayers of celebration, intercession and adoration, family groupings enable children to jointly create prayers of thanks to be combined in a 'family prayer book.' This also gave pupils opportunities to suggest two new verses for the hymn 'Thank you Lord.' The frequent visits of foundation governors in school and the discussions between governors, staff and children provide informal evaluation that informs development. However, the school has recognised the benefits of a greater involvement by pupils in the planning and evaluation of worship. The church is regularly used for festival services that include services and blessings for new nursery and reception children to welcome them into the school family. There is also a farewell service for children as they leave Year 6.

The effectiveness of religious education is good

The very conscientious and dynamic subject leader is working hard to raise standards in pupils' achievement. She has developed a new syllabus based on the local syllabus with modifications to suit the school. She has led a series of meetings to familiarise staff, commenting on assessment and marking procedures. Children's work has been monitored to indicate levelling and support teachers' knowledge. Realistic action plans indicate developments and future targets and give an accurate assessment of the current position of the school. Teaching is good because of the subject knowledge and enthusiasm of staff, good relationships and resulting enthusiasm of pupils. Good use of resources and questioning techniques with times for reflection give pupils an understanding of learning about and from religion. In a Y1 lesson on Creation, a range of learning styles was effectively used to engage all pupils. Opportunities for reflection enabled children to answer 'how can we show God we care?' Y4 children effectively shared their learning with Y1 children as they retold the story of Sukkot. This also illustrated the Jewish custom of maintaining tradition through storytelling and gave pupils opportunity to use Jewish terminology. Pupils value worship as 'learning about other faiths and to have respect for other people's beliefs. It is also valued as a time when adults and children may share their personal faith. Work in books is usually well presented with learning objectives stated. Teachers are beginning to develop the use of marking comments to support next stages of learning. Although the current standards are in line with national expectations, as teachers became more familiar with the syllabus and effective assessments and tracking, there appears to be a good capacity for future development.

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

Driven by the shared vision of the headteacher and governors, the whole school family of staff, parents and children share a deep and active commitment to the distinctive character of this school. This results in high expectations of academic and personal achievement for everyone. All governors have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and are regular visitors to the school. Often these visits are to support children's learning. Observations of school life and the resulting discussions inform informal assessment, creating a cycle of self-evaluation and action planning. Although the Christian character, ethos and prayer are central to the governance of the school, governors have recognised the benefits of further exploration and evaluation of the character of the school in terms of specific Christian values. Foundation governors regularly visit the school and lead committees. They also ensure the ethos of the school is maintained by ensuring that staff appointments can contribute to the development of the school. Parents value the unique ethos of the school with its strong sense of family, respect for each individual and importance of worship. Comments such as 'our children leave our small family to be welcomed into a larger family that we are all part of' reflect the shared communities of school and church. Parents also praise the headteacher 'who leads by Christian example' and the staff 'who show Christian service in action.' The close spiritual as well as physical links with Christ Church and the shared use of 'The Junction' reflect the numbers of governors, staff and parents who are church members. The school also has very effective links with other local schools.