

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Milton St-Blaise Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane Milton Heights Abingdon Oxfordshire. OX144DR

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Satisfactory
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Date of inspection	23 January 2018
Date of last inspection	26 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled Primary 123178
Headteacher	Ruth Leach
Inspector's name and number	Joanne Daly 843

School context

Milton St-Blaise is a small primary school that has recently been extended from three classes to four. Its numbers have grown over recent years and it now has 74 pupils on roll. Most of its pupils come from within the catchment area and are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The school enjoys close links with the church of St-Blaise which has had a period of interregnum until recently. The school has a new RE leader who joined in September 2017.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Milton St-Blaise as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong and dedicated Christian leadership of the headteacher and governors creates a school in which all pupils, staff and parents feel nurtured and valued.
- An embedded Christian vision encapsulates a set of Christian values that are made explicit to all stakeholders and have a significant impact on the daily life of the school.
- Collective worship has great value for the whole community and reflects the strong mutually beneficial relationships the school has with the local church and the school community. Its impact can be clearly seen in all aspects of school life.
- Governors support, challenge and rigorously monitor the Christian character of the school ensuring that this informs strategic planning and leads to continuous improvements as a church school.
- The school's relationship with parents and the local church community and the relationships between all who work within the school are outstanding.

Areas to improve

- To further develop pupils' understanding of the ways in which Christians live and worship in different parts of the world so that they are fully aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith.
- To continue to monitor and evaluate rigorously as the school expands further to ensure that the school's distinctive Christian character remains a high priority.

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

The headteacher, governors and staff at Milton St-Blaise Primary School are committed to doing the best possible for each individual pupil in the school. This is reflected in the school's vision which is to 'provide inspiration through Christian values enabling all to become the best they can be.' The Christian character of the school is lived out in the chosen values of 'love, respect, determination, peace, creativity and creation'. These values are deeply embedded in everything the school does and says and result in high standards of behaviour and excellent relationships throughout the whole community. They also make a significant contribution to the personal development, wellbeing and safety of pupils and have a positive impact on the learning and the achievement of pupils in the widest sense. Governors say that the values influence every decision the school makes and that for each decision 'we ask ourselves what would Jesus want us to do?' Pupils explain how values are seen in action all the time in the school. One child commented, 'We are a Christian school and our values make us happy because we respect one another and love each other.' Another said, 'In class we encourage each other and help and support one another, not just in worship but in everything in school.' Parents and staff say that everyone in the school community cares for and supports one another and that the headteacher demonstrates this by showing genuine care for everyone in the school community. Staff say this results in them wanting to come into school each day because they feel valued and loved. The school focus on nurturing and supporting those pupils with additional learning or social needs has led to transformational change in the lives of some pupils. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is shown by high levels of attendance and behaviour that is respectful and reflective of the school values of respect and love. Spiritual development is a strength of the school and contributes to a broad and exciting curriculum. The school has a spiritual, moral, social, cultural (SMSC) policy developed with staff and governors and shared with stakeholders. It gives a clear definition of spirituality and identifies many opportunities in the curriculum for SMSC development including in religious education (RE) such as 'the opportunity to consider life, our place in the universe and the purpose of life'. The RE curriculum and the school values have a strong impact on pupils' SMSC development. The RE leader introduced a programme of visits to different places of worship and a series of visits by visitors of other faiths into school. This has enabled pupils to talk about other faiths with a high degree of understanding and respect. They speak enthusiastically about RE and recognise the importance of knowing about the beliefs of others and being able to talk openly about their own. One pupil said, 'Anyone can believe. Here we are encouraged to have our views and opinions on what we believe and we get insights into other people's beliefs and religions so that we can be respectful'. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity as a local, national and global faith but this could be further developed. Pupils explore RE using 'big questions' and talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about what they have learnt. The new RE leader is keen to continually develop RE in the school and is attending the training on 'Understanding Christianity' to support this. Pupils are developing an understanding of courageous advocacy and making a difference in the world. This is seen in their support of Water Aid and in supporting Dr, Barnardo's. Pupils take some responsibility for deciding on what charities to support and speak about how this charitable approach relates to their values of love and respect for others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is Outstanding

The whole school community places great value on worship in the school which plays an important part in reinforcing the school values and making everyone feel part of the school. Pupils say that worship makes them feel calm and they enjoy the messages they take from worship as these remind them to be kind people and encourage them not to give up when the work gets hard. Parents and staff enjoy the calmness of worship and the time it gives them to reflect on life. The new incumbent said he feels a 'a real warmth and stillness' in school worship. New school members including pupils, staff and clergy are given a 'special jewel' to add to the school jewel box when they join the school. This is to symbolise that everyone related to the school is special and unique with gifts and talents. Worship is securely grounded in the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. It is well planned with a focus on the school's values and the Christian calendar. Planning includes worship being led by a variety of people including the headteacher, staff and the vicar. The church community regularly lead 'Open the Book' worship which pupils speak enthusiastically about and it has clearly helped to extend their impressive knowledge of Bible stories. Pupils plan and lead worship and the school is looking for ways to extend these opportunities. The church of St-Blaise is also used for worship during key Christian festivals and this year the school used it for Christingle for the first time. Pupils understand the importance of worship and their place in it and the gathering of worship develops their understanding of liturgy. When the school gathers for worship it begins with a pupil from each class bringing a symbol to the worship table. This includes a Bible, a fish, a three-wick candle and a cross. Pupils open worship with the lighting of the three-wick candle while saying God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Two pupils wearing tee shirts representing the termly value and the overarching value of love open worship with a welcome and response and the school prayer. Worship ends with a prayer and the candle is blown out to signify the close of worship. Pupils speak confidently about the Trinity and how the lighting of the candle represents this in the same way that Christians understand God to be the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer is a frequent and natural part of each day and pupils

write and say prayer in worship and at lunchtimes. Some pupils speak about using prayer in their own lives. One child said, 'Prayer lets us speak to God as he always wants to know how we are and be in contact with us.' The school has a central prayer space in the middle of the school where pupils can go and reflect and write prayers to be read in worship. Annually, pupils take part in developing a prayer space in school supported by the church and community. Pupils say they value the time given to stillness and reflection in the school day. Each classroom has an interactive reflection space where pupils can write prayers. In these spaces the values are clearly displayed and linked to Biblical texts. Pupil evaluations of worship has led to change. An example of this is that the worship table is now dressed in different coloured cloths to represent the colours of the church year. Pupils had requested to know more about the colours and this resulted in a new poster in the hall to help them learn what these colours represent.

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

The school lives and breathes its Christian vision and core values and these are clearly articulated and promoted by the headteacher, governors and staff. Leadership has rapidly developed the Christian distinctiveness of the school since its last inspection. Governors consulted widely in selecting the six core Christian values for the school and all stakeholders know what they are and why they are Christian values. Stakeholders clearly articulate the significant impact these values have on learning, behaviour, relationships and the daily life of the school. They say they create a happy, nurturing environment where pupils and staff thrive. The commitment of leaders and staff to developing an outstanding church school has been the result of their vision and desire to do the best for each individual pupils and adult in the school so that they can be the best they can be. Governors successfully challenge and support the leadership and have in place rigorous and robust monitoring and evaluation of all areas of being a church school and involving all groups in school. This has led to significant improvements as a church school since the last inspection and all previous development areas have been thoroughly addressed. Leaders, including the RE leader and governors, monitor and evaluates RE in the school and this feeds into the strategic planning for RE. The school's focus on being an outstanding church school is reinforced in everything the school does. School development is part of the School Vision Map document. This document contains a section on the Christian character of the school including worship and RE and is regularly monitored by all leaders in the school and discussed at full governing body meetings. The RE leader, new in post this year, is well supported by the school and is confident in her role to lead improvements and develop the subject further. She is encouraged to attend diocesan RE partnership meetings and attend training at the diocese. Governors plan for and support all staff professional development through training and support from the diocese and they themselves have benefitted from training on being leaders in a church school. There is a real sense of belonging in the school community with the school, church and village working closely together in such a way that there are mutual and substantial benefits for all groups. The school has strong links with the local church and has already welcomed the new incumbent into the school and identified how to develop these links further. The statutory requirements for RE and worship are more than met.

SIAMS report January 2018 Milton St-Blaise Voluntary Controlled Church of England School Abingdon OX14 4DR