



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Culworth Church of England Academy

The Green
Culworth
Banbury
OX17 2BB

Diocese: Peterborough

Local authority: Northamptonshire

Dates of inspection: 7 May 2014

Date of last inspection: 25 March 2009

School's unique reference number: 122019

Headteacher: Suzanne Lawrence

Inspector's name and number: John Weaver 402

School context

This rural school serves Culworth and three other nearby villages. Due to its popularity, parents from outside this immediate area, including across the Oxfordshire and Warwickshire borders, apply for admission. Most pupils are of white British heritage. Currently there are few pupils in receipt of free schools meals and the percentage of pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register is well below the national average. The school became an Academy as part of a multi-academy trust in September 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Culworth Church of England Academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Pupils achieve very well because they gain great self-confidence and self-reliance due to the strong Christian principles of love, respect, forgiveness, joy and thankfulness that thoroughly underpin the school
- The head teacher's commitment to Christian principles enthuses staff and pupils who aim for the very best at all times
- Pupils look after and encourage each other constantly
- The Academy governors support, challenge and nurture the school staff, who feel privileged to work at the school

Areas to improve

- Give regular opportunities for pupils to plan and lead more acts of collective worship (CW) in school and in church
- Develop the use of technology to further enhance the impact of displays to engage the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural (SMSC) development

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

Data shows that pupil achievement is above the national average and all pupils, including those from vulnerable groups, make good and better progress. Pupils' self-confidence is high and all are motivated to succeed academically, socially and spiritually, because the school is firmly rooted in Christian values. All pupils know the school values, and because the 'value of the month' is e-mailed to pupils' homes parents are encouraged to support their children in upholding them. This has a very strong impact. Parents say that the children have learned high-level personal skills for resolving disputes. One parent noted that 'the children have learned empathy- really hard to teach'. Relationships are a key strength. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils encourage and look after each other, and go beyond the call of duty willingly. A parent spoke movingly about the transformation in her own child, who came from a school in London, from day one at Culworth. Pupils can clearly identify examples from the Bible and the life of Jesus which exemplify the school values, and of how these inform their own actions. Religious education (RE) and worship also make a very strong contribution to this. The pupils confidently decide on charities to support, and organise the fund-raising themselves. Displays, biblical quotations and special places in the school encourage reflection and discussion, and pupils regularly use these as stimulus for their own prayer. The use of modern technology to further sharpen the impact of these has not yet been taken. Attendance is good and any issues are addressed by the governors in a way wholly in keeping with the school's Christian ethos. In this fully-inclusive school there have been no exclusions in recent years.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Prayer and reflection form integral parts of all acts of CW in the school. Because of all this, all the pupils, including the youngest, are able to talk to God in a completely natural way. They use the 'prayer garden' regularly for their own prayers, and parents confirm that they ask to pray for individual people and events at home. Pupils were able to recount a number of memorable acts of CW, showing their strong impact.

Worship themes are wide-ranging which enable pupils to have a clear knowledge of the church's year, Christianity in action and biblical teaching. Christian values regularly form worship topics. Pupils are familiar with Anglican tradition and practice from regular school worship held in the neighbouring church and the Rector's leadership of CW in school. They know the traditional version of the Lord's Prayer, and the regular use of the Blessing, 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' has helped the children to begin to understand the concept of one God in three different forms. Pupils' singing in CW is enthusiastic and joyful, greatly enhanced by the accompaniment of a gifted pianist. The pupils know that people eat bread and drink wine in church to remember the Last Supper, and understand the symbolism of the Eucharist. They understand other aspects of the Christian tradition through CW and the creative curriculum: for example, they learned about Catholicism while studying Italy. The use of parents from non-Christian faiths to give the pupils first-hand experience has been invaluable in deepening their understanding. Regular monitoring and evaluation by governors, senior managers and the Rector have enabled the outstanding judgment in the previous inspection to be strongly maintained. Staff, governors and the Rector plan the CW programme very effectively and monitoring and evaluation is now embedded. Pupils are involved in the planning of 'celebration assemblies' and the Year 6 leavers' service in church, but they are not yet routinely involved in planning and leading acts of worship in school as part of the regular pattern.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE is treated as a core subject. It is taught both as a discrete subject and within the school's creative curriculum. The pupils understand the importance of RE in their lives and achieve very well because of the quality of the teaching. Two outstanding lessons were observed, confirming the school's record of lesson observation in this subject. In an upper Key Stage 2 class the contribution to the pupils' SMSC development was outstanding in discussion on the nature of morality. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, the (mostly) very young children were able to discuss the similarities between themselves and Adam and Eve in a meaningful way. High standards of work are evident in the pupils' books. The school's assessment system, based on work scrutiny and

discussions with each pupil, is now fully embedded and there is early intervention if a pupil is not making the expected progress. Governor monitoring and scrutiny of data and work ensures that high standards are maintained. Attainment is always high: for example, in 2013 over 60% of the Key Stage 2 cohort attained level 5. Parents from Buddhist and Jewish backgrounds and those from non- Anglican Christian traditions have provided first-hand experiences for the pupils so that their knowledge of some practices of these faiths is very secure. In an area for improvement from the previous inspection, that of increasing opportunities to extend cultural experiences, creative ways have been found to avoid unsustainable cost implications. One such is the pupils' virtual visit to Oman. Such approaches have ensured that the pupils have developed a secure understanding of some cultures outside their immediate environment.

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

The head teacher, staff and governors are clear in their understanding of the nature of a highly successful church school. Through personal example and effective management to put the vision into practice, they have created a school which is distinctive and effective in its Christian vision. Everyone encourages the pupils to do their very best, and because of this, standards of achievement are high. The school is totally inclusive, so that parents of all faiths and none are confident in sending their children. The second area to improve from the previous inspection, embedding systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, has also been successfully addressed. The school's self-evaluation as a church school shows a clear knowledge of where the school is, and how to continue to improve. Recent actions by the governing body have ensured that succession planning is fully in place. There is a genuine sense of partnership: one parent said, 'We know we are valued'. Strong links exist with the church and village communities. The training provided by the Diocese has been welcomed and had strong impact.

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