

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Dr. Radcliffe's Church of England Primary School

Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX25 4SF

Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Oxford
Previous SIAS inspection grade	Outstanding
Date of academy conversion	1 June 2017
Name of multi-academy trust	Oxford Diocese Schools Trust
Date of inspection	6 March 2018
Date of last inspection	13 March 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Primary Voluntary Aided 144186
Headteacher	Frances Brown
Inspector's name and number	Jenny Earp 288

School context

Dr Radcliffe's is a village school in a rural location to the north of Oxford. It was founded in 1640 by Dr Samuel Radcliffe, who was the rector of Steeple Aston and the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford. Since the last denominational inspection, the school has continued to celebrate its Christian distinctiveness by converting to an academy as part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. There are 201 pupils on roll, ranging from Reception to Year 6. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average, but there is a lower than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional government funding. The majority of pupils are White British.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dr. Radcliffe's Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher, staff, governors and clergy are united behind an ambitious Christian vision for the school that is continuing a long historic foundation as a place of faith, as well as learning.
- Christian values underpin the school and are evident in every aspect of its life and work. They inspire the excellent, respectful relationships between and among adults and pupils.
- The worship programme is varied and clearly focuses on exploring key areas of Christian belief and practice and provides relevant experiences, closely linked to their impact on life and living in today's world.
- The close partnership with the local church and clergy adds significant capacity to the school's work with its pupils and their families.
- Strong and effective partnerships with the diocese and local schools contribute well to school life and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to plan and lead aspects of collective worship in order to improve their collective worship experiences.
- Develop pupils' understanding of diversity and difference by planning a programme of visitors from different faiths and cultures so they may share their expertise and knowledge.

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

'Together We Achieve' is the deeply-embedded school motto and is reflected in the way distinctively Christian values abound in every area of the school's life. There is a strong commitment to the spiritual development of each and every pupil and they are guided with dedication and kindness to achieve their potential, regardless of their background or needs. Great thought is given to nurturing the individual child as unique and valued by God, ensuring that each one takes pride in their learning and feels happy and safe. As a result, pupils at Dr. Radcliffe's thrive and develop in a school environment where the Christian values of respect, truthfulness, friendship, compassion, forgiveness and trust are underpinned at the school and are lived out in its work. These explicit Christian values are known and readily articulated by parents and pupils, who recognise that they are what make the school such a special, caring community. Parents praise the way the values are modelled by the headteacher and staff, who are always readily available to talk to them if they have any concerns. Many say that they choose to send their children here because it is a church school. They feel lucky that their children are at Dr. Radcliffe's because 'we know that the school is inclusive and all the staff do their best for every single child.' The school's Christian character motivates and shapes the warm and respectful relationships between and among adults and learners and is mirrored in pupils' excellent, courteous behaviour. Pupils say they love coming to school because the teachers treat them with kindness and 'it is fun and we feel special'. The school's Christian character shapes its approach to all aspects of school life. Because of this, pupils are keen to come to school, attend regularly and work hard. This means that they achieve high standards, both academically and in their personal development. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) through its rich programme and discussions around the big questions. A broad range of RE activities and extra-curricular opportunities ensure that a highly developed understanding of spirituality is shared across the school community. Pupils' response is very positive to the wide variety of performing arts activities, after-school clubs and cultural enrichment opportunities organised by the school, particularly the trips to London and the residential trips for Years 5 and 6. They are sensitive to the needs of others locally, nationally and internationally through participating in fundraising activities with enthusiasm and compassion for others. They are fully aware that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith and show a high level of knowledge and understanding of diversity and difference in the church and in other religions. Teaching and learning is well planned and pupils are both excited and challenged by RE. Consequently, RE makes a strong contribution to the Christian character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship is inspirational and plays a central role in the life of the school. It is carefully structured and planned by the headteacher, drawn from the church's year and the school's specific Christian values. Each term a focus is made on one particular value, such as forgiveness. All pupils engage with the concept of forgiveness, saying that 'forgiveness does not change the past, but it can change the future', with even a young Year 1 child remarking, 'It wipes the slate clean'. On the day of the inspection, a motivating act of worship allowed pupils to take part in a drama linked to the Bible story of the unforgiving servant in order to illustrate, 'If you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you'. The impact of this was powerful, enabling pupils to engage in moral and spiritual reflection on how this Bible story can influence their own behaviour and actions. Although pupils are often involved in collective worship and frequently write prayers or take part in aspects of worship, opportunities to plan and lead worship themselves are infrequent. Close links with the church and regular visits by the vicar help pupils to learn about Christian traditions. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of Anglican practice and are very aware of the seasons of the church calendar and Christian festivals. During collective worship, pupils display excellent behaviour and attitudes, while staff demonstrate the values of love and care in providing sensitive support. In the act of worship on forgiveness, all those present joined in the prayers and the singing. Dr. Radcliffe's has a strong focus on prayer and reflection and it is a golden thread woven throughout the school, providing a core strand in acts of worship. It is also part of the rhythm of school life, for example when special events take place, such as the recent BeSpace prayer week. The impact of this was profound on everyone at the school, particularly on pupils, who were given room to explore faith and spirituality creatively, engaging in prayerful activities. Pupils appreciate the positive value of collective prayer for the community and talk of the 'teaspoon' prayers they have written. 'It's when we talk to God', said a Year 3 pupil. They also develop a profound understanding of the purposes of personal prayer. Parents report that their children discuss the content of worship at home and will often pray spontaneously for those who are suffering or in need. Collective worship has a strong focus on the Trinity, with the whole school reciting the phrase, 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' as a candle with three wicks is lit at the start of worship. Pupils recognise that the Holy Trinity means that God is 'three in one' and older pupils talk about it with an impressive degree of understanding. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship is thorough and involves all stakeholders, thus ensuring that feedback and suggestions lead to significant improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The overall quality of teaching and learning in RE is outstanding. This is due to the quality of the planned curriculum, assessment, pupil monitoring, benchmarking of standards and the quality of the learning environment. The school's attainment data shows that achievement in RE is high and progress is rapid. The leadership of RE is very strong and has led to robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of RE across the school, including ambitious plans for the subject's further development. With the support of diocesan officers, the school has strengthened the teaching and leadership of RE by providing high quality staff training. As a result of this, as well as the introduction of the new diocesan scheme of work, including Understanding Christianity, the school has moved from good to outstanding in RE. The school judges most RE teaching and learning to be outstanding overall and the evidence from this inspection indicates that this is so. Lessons are meticulously planned and packed with a rich variety of learning tasks, enabling pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. Because of this, learning in RE is lively and expectations are challenging, but realistic. Lessons seen during the inspection demonstrated a range of opportunities for pupils to explain their ideas and explore meaning. The Year 2 class were learning about the symbolism of the cross within the context of Lent and the Easter story. Questioning effectively probed their understanding of why Easter matters to Christians. The use of the 'chilli-challenge' helps older pupils to work at the point of their level of ability, while enhancing their independence in learning. Ideas are captured and expanded, for instance, through the use of Christian paintings using learning partners, which leads to thought-provoking, impressive discussions. Links with the Christian values and SMSC development are fundamental to the RE programme. For instance, pupils visit a number of different places of worship, such as the synagogue, Hindu temple and mosque. Recently, there have been few visitors from different faiths who come to the school to talk about their traditions and beliefs. Pupils are taught to understand and have respect for the beliefs of others through stories, art and music inspired by different faiths. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced 'reflection journals' throughout the school. From these, the range and high quality of RE at the school can be ascertained and the impact is positive and wide-ranging.

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

The leadership and management of the school as a church school is exceptionally good and a strength of the school. There are effective systems in place for keeping the school's Christian distinctiveness under review that leads to accurate self-evaluation and to next steps for improvement, which provide a clear focus for action, including on how finances are used. Governors know the school well and articulate their Christian vision confidently, relating how it impacts on the high standard of achievement for all pupils, including those who are vulnerable. They challenge and support the work of the school very effectively and take pupils' views into account as part of their ongoing monitoring. For example, focussed visits and regular learning walks by the governors make a significant contribution to monitoring the impact of Christian distinctiveness. School leaders and governors, therefore, have a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement and plan effectively to address them, focussing directly on the academic and personal development of all pupils. The strong Christian leadership has secured excellent collective worship and has moved RE forward, with a specific focus on the professional development of all staff. As a result, leaders and governors share a commitment both to the future leadership needs of the school and to the wider church school community. Discussions with pupils, parents, staff and governors present a picture of a very caring and supportive school, which provides a framework for pupils to acquire a love of learning and to achieve the best they can. Parents describe staff as a 'fantastic team, who are great role models'. The vicar is a regular visitor to the school and links with the church of St. Peter and St. Paul are mutually beneficial. For instance, shared reflection days, organised by the RE leader, give opportunities for the school and church communities to come together in order to reflect and worship as one. The school is a member of the Warriner partnership of schools. This enables the school to work closely with other schools to support staff development, share good practice and provide enrichment activities for pupils at the school. The very strong focus on agreed Christian values inspires and drives all aspects of school improvement and leadership, ensuring that arrangements for both RE and worship exceed statutory requirements. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy and governors, has maintained the school's Christian distinctiveness well since the previous inspection. The two key issues for improvement have been closely addressed. There is a clear vision for future development, based on encouraging all pupils to flourish in order to 'live life in all its fullness'. A colourful display, demonstrating this biblical theme, is placed prominently in the school's entrance hall, highlighting the school's commitment to this ethos. All members of the school family feel valued and they are very well supported. Because of this, staff morale is high and all work collaboratively to achieve shared goals.