



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Bladon Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Park Street Bladon OX20 1RW

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 20 May 2014

Date of last inspection: June 2009

School's unique reference number: 123119

Headteacher: Simon Isherwood

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

Bladon is a small primary school of four classes, bordering Blenheim Palace. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A new foundation stage building was opened in 2013. Since the last inspection the school has had two headteachers.

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

- The physical and spiritual links with the church and clergy securely link the school values to explicit distinctive Christian values
- The impact of worship on pupils' understanding of Christian values is reflected in their behaviour, attitudes and relationships
- The high profile given to worship and religious education strengthens their contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Areas to improve

- Provide greater opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and confidence in the planning, delivery and evaluation of worship as part of their spiritual development.
- Ensure that vision of the school is clearly linked to the Christian values seen in action in the everyday life of the school to promote a more explicit Christian character
- Ensure that all stakeholders contribute to self-evaluation as a church school to inform strategic development

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

The school has a welcoming and caring ethos based on a set of values displayed in the 'school values tree' along with the names of pupils displaying these values. In practice, pupils are gaining confidence in explaining these as Christian values. This is because the whole school community actively promote Christian links in daily life. The input of the clergy, the high profile of school values, religious education (RE) and worship are key features of the distinctive Christian character of the school. These have a deep impact on everyone in school, each being valued and nurtured as a unique, talented individual. Children are well mannered, confident and articulate. They display excellent behaviour and attitudes to work. Relationships throughout the school reflect care and respect. Pupils describe lessons as being 'taught in a fun way to help us learn.' Teaching is judged to be at least good and pupil attainment has been well above national averages for a number of years. The Christian character of the school influences the whole curriculum. For example, the inclusion of Bible quotes in 'Big Write' and 'Philosophy for Children' develops Bible links and thinking skills. Whole school value homework such as 'What do Christians do to show kindness?' enables children, siblings and parents to discuss Christian values. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school with opportunities in lessons and out of school activities. These include family service at lunchtime, supporting younger peers. Pupils' council and the school parliament give opportunities to explore and support a range of national and international charities. For example, children show Christian values in action by sponsoring a cow to support a community in India. Religious education has a high profile in school, supported by displays and guidance 'how to improve in RE.' Pupils have a developing knowledge of and respect for Christianity and other faiths, understanding that 'big questions' is deepening their thinking of faith issues.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is recognised as a key element in the distinctive Christian charter of the school. Half termly themes agreed by staff and clergy reflect the current needs of the school. The clergy securely link school values to explicit Christian values. Other acts of worship make good use of material such as 'Values for Life' and 'Christian Values for Schools'. The planning overview includes links to Christian values and/or Bible stories, spiritual development opportunities and suggested questions and reflections to develop the impact of spirituality. Children explain the impact of worship as 'we learn about God and Jesus and try to behave like him.' They also recognise the differences between worship and RE. The input of the clergy team ensures pupils are aware of the church year and Anglican practice. Worship has a well-defined pattern with a shared greeting, lighted candle, story/message linked to the teaching or life of Jesus, a prayer and dismissal. Pupils understand worship and are comfortable in church as the rector and curate use the same format and responses in school as in church. Children are engaged by lively delivery, use of slides and explain the significance of the candle that marks the beginning and end of worship as 'the candle show respect for God and that Jesus the light of the world is everywhere.' They have a developing understanding of the life of Jesus and the Trinity. Pupils understand the purpose of prayer and confidently recite the Lord's Prayer and school prayer. The profile of prayer in school is continued by a prayer/reflection area in the hall, maintained by a church member. Pupils write and share prayers that are used in school and church worship. Pupils use reflection areas in classrooms and an outdoor reflection board to further their spiritual development. Although pupils willingly contribute prayers and responses in school and to festival services in church, they do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their own spiritual journey by planning, leading and evaluating their own worship. Informal discussion with staff, pupils, clergy and governors informs development. Homework such as 'What Lent means to me' gives children opportunities to share spiritual development opportunities with parents. Children understand belonging to a wider worshipping community

because of involvement in the Woodstock Passion Play and the St Martintide lantern procession. When pupils leave the school they are presented with a Bible, an annual gift from Bladon church.

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

The school has a well-communicated vision, based on school values, to 'ensure all children achieve their best academically and personally, are confident, respect themselves and each other.' However, this does not sufficiently encapsulate the Christian values that are evident in all aspects of school life. The regular presence and input of the Rector and Curate make a significant impact on how pupils and parents understand the school as a church school. Governors support the role of RE and worship as vital aspects of the distinctive Christian character of the school. Independent advice to identify the links with Christian values in the RE syllabus and the input of clergy give staff greater knowledge and confidence. School and diocesan training further underpin the understanding of staff and governors. The head has successfully driven improvements in teaching and pupil performance. The development point from the previous inspection has been addressed by the appointment of a new foundation governor. This has prompted opportunities to reconsider the Christian perspective of the school values and Christian character of the school. Self-evaluation as a church school is currently led by the headteacher with informal opportunities for the input of other groups and identifies some areas for development. The references to school values and distinctive Christian character in the school development plan are not sufficiently explicit. Parents are proud of the school and its impact on their children. They comment how quickly children readily assimilate the Christian values of the school by singing and sharing Christian ideas at home. The close links between school and church, physically, with many children walking through the churchyard on their way to school and spiritually with Christian values integrated into the distinctive character of the school, enables children to develop an awareness of how faith makes a difference to their lives. The school has a supportive 'Friends of Bladon' group that raises funds and encourages community involvement. This is also seen in the involvement of volunteers repainting the playground. Several members of the church community regularly listen to readers. The school has beneficial links with other local schools to support curriculum and staff development.

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