



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Westcott Church of England Voluntary Aided School

High Street
Westcott, Aylesbury
HP18 0PH

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding (VC)

Current inspection grade: Good (VA)

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 17 June 2015

Date of last inspection: June 2010

School's unique reference number: 110442

Headteacher: Barry Grace

Inspector's name and number: Janet Northing 792

School context

The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school with 79 children including nursery. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average, as is the number eligible for pupil premium. In September 2012 the school changed its status from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided. From September 2012 the school retained its former Year 2 pupils, who stayed on as Year 3. These pupils will be in Year 6 in September 2015, as the school becomes an all through primary.

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

- The commitment and leadership of the headteacher, supported by governors, in ensuring that the Christian distinctiveness remains a priority as the school grows in size.
- Explicit Christian values are deeply embedded in the school's ethos and are lived out on a daily basis.
- A caring Christian environment pervades the school enabling pupils to thrive and aspire to achieve their full potential.
- The school's link with St Mary the Virgin Church has a significant impact on collective worship and the spiritual development of the whole community.

Areas to improve

- Put in place rigorous systems to monitor, evaluate and strategically develop the school's Christian distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school, to ensure its continuing impact on the lives and achievements of learners.
- Support children's learning about other world religions through visits to different places of worship and visitors from other faiths.

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

Christian values are central to the ethos of Westcott school and its teaching and learning. The school successfully achieves its aim, 'To promote in children a desire to examine and understand Christian values and to grow up in a Christian community, so that they will not wish to separate God from anything else they do.' Currently coming towards the end of a period of expansion, the school has successfully kept its distinctive Christian character at the heart of the community. As a direct consequence of the Christian values children are able to make informed choices about their behaviour, which is exemplary, and their attitudes to learning. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points with standards across the school at or above the national average in all curriculum areas. Attendance is improving, though still slightly below the national average. Children's wellbeing is a high priority. They gain confidence and maturity through various leadership roles within the school including Eco Warriors, School Ambassadors, School Council, House Captains and Worship Teams. Pastoral care stemming from Christian love is a key feature of the school and support is offered to those families who need it. Parents speak warmly of the support they and their children receive, particularly during times of family bereavement and crisis. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is well supported by the Christian character of the school. The Christian values provide children with a moral framework on which to base their decision-making. Adults act as good role models for the pupils with positive relationships evident between all members of the community. Children are passionate in speaking about their own spiritual journey and the place of God as a loving Father always at their side. Respect for others is inherent throughout the school and extends to those who are of different religious backgrounds. Religious Education (RE) supports the Christian character of the school and provides a structure that allows the children to explore diversity and difference both within the church and other faith communities.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Westcott is a school community that places worship at the heart of everything it does. The life of the church is inextricably linked with the life of the school to the point where the school is the church and vice versa. The school community make the short walk to church on four days each week and as a consequence pupils view it as an extension of their school. A few parents also choose to join the school for worship in church, valuing this shared experience with their children. As the school continues to grow in size worship remains the inspirational bedrock for this community. Worship informs children's understanding of the school's Christian values and inspires their fund raising for charitable organisations. Leadership is shared between clergy, staff and pupils resulting in a diversity of experience and deepening spiritual maturity within the school community. Visitors into school offer a creative and inspiring communication of Christian values as part of worship. Teams comprising of pupils in Years 4 and 5 have regular experience of planning, leading and evaluating worship every Friday in the church. Planning clearly shows the children's development over time as they fully embrace the richness of this experience. A four year cycle of themes focus on Christian values, liturgical seasons of the Church's year and Bible stories that support children's theological understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Pupils express their perception of prayer in terms of being able to talk to God at any time and in any place because he has a strong heart and is always ready to listen. Prayer features prominently in the school day with reflective areas available in classrooms for children, and the church is accessible for staff. In this way pupils and staff recognise the importance of Christian reflection as part of their individual and corporate spiritual journey. Worship is monitored and evaluated on a weekly basis by all staff and the older pupils leading to on-going improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

RE has a high profile in the school with learning that meets the needs of all pupils in a creative and stimulating way. A two-year rolling plan is in place that follows the diocesan scheme of work. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school, Christian values and SMSC

development. Teaching is consistently good, with the teaching of Christianity adding to pupil's biblical knowledge and understanding through in depth study of stories and events. Well-planned lessons use a range of approaches and support children to be evaluative and reflective learners. Children have opportunities to ask challenging questions that develop higher order thinking skills. Assessment in RE is based on the formative assessment outlined in the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus. School tracking indicates that children make good progress across the school from their different starting points. Pupils have targets for RE and a range of assessment methods are used to ensure progress is maintained from one term to the next. Attainment is in line with national expectations for all pupils. Although relatively new to the role, the RE subject leader communicates a clear vision for further development in the subject. She is well supported, carries out regular observations and book monitoring, as well as moderation of work, to ensure that children's learning is maximised. Whilst a large proportion of the RE curriculum is dedicated to the study of Christianity, pupils experience a range of other faiths with planned experiences to learn both about religion and from religion. Children readily articulate that though there are similarities and differences between Christianity and other world religions, frequently values are shared. Currently pupils have limited first hand experience of religious diversity, as they are not involved in visits to other places of worship or visitors to school from other faiths.

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

The headteacher leads by example in living out and promoting a vision for the school that is founded on strong Christian principles. The governing body shares this vision and is keen to demonstrate its impact on achievement, the school's Christian ethos and wellbeing of the whole community. The decision by the leadership and management of the school to convert from a voluntary controlled to a voluntary aided church school is a clear indication of their commitment to its distinctively Christian character. In addition, the expansion of the school from a First to all through Primary is a direct response to meeting the needs of the families within the local community. This is a superb example of the mutual benefits enjoyed when school, church and community work closely together. Leaders use the school's Christian values to inform their strategic decision-making. In response to an area highlighted for development at the time of the last inspection the school has re-established a Christian Ethos and Values Committee. A focus on defining the school's distinctive Christian character, progression in RE and reviewing SMSC targets has proved beneficial in moving the school forward. However, a lack of rigour in evaluating the impact of other areas of the school's Christian distinctiveness, including collective worship and RE, needs addressing. In revisiting its aims, values and mission statement with parents, staff and children the school has renewed their relevance for the present day. Greater consultation with parents regarding the school's Christian character enables them to play a full part in determining the on-going direction of the school. The leadership of RE and collective worship are well supported through the diocesan network. Professional development is matched to the needs of staff and annual appraisals identify potential future leaders of church schools. The partnership with St Mary the Virgin Church is particularly close and enriches the lives of all members of the school community. Arrangements for RE and collective worship more than meet statutory requirements.

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