



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church**

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Aston and Cote Church of England Primary School (Voluntary Controlled)

Cote Road

Aston, Oxon OX18 2DU

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current Inspection Grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Date of inspection: 24 September 2015

Date of last inspection: 13 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 123106

Headteacher: Paula Phillips

Inspector's name and number: Jane Tuckett 668

School context

Aston and Cote CE Primary is a smaller than average village school and most of its 135 pupils are middle class white British. Around 60% of pupils come from the catchment area with the remainder coming from further afield. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (PP) and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is well below the national average. The school has six classes for the seven year groups. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2012. Since then there have been significant changes within the governing body and some staff turnover due to natural causes.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Aston and Cote CE Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian vision results in a school with a distinctively Christian ethos in which values underpin all of school life and are championed by leadership, governors and staff.
- Teachers model the Christian values and pupils are keen to learn and enjoy a rich and varied curriculum.
- Pupils benefit from the broader perspectives and opportunities for service given by strong links with the local church and village.

Areas to improve

- Work through and embed the new four year rolling programmes for Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship and ensure that high quality teaching, monitoring of all aspects for impact and evaluation of progress continue to deliver high standards.
- Explore every possible opening for developing national and global links which broaden the range of experience of religious, racial and cultural diversity which is offered to pupils.

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

The school's ethos is based on five core values (love, courage, forgiveness, honesty and respect); these are visible everywhere around the school, in newsletters and on the website, clearly linked to New Testament texts. Since her appointment three years ago the headteacher has worked tirelessly and successfully to embed these values. Art works in the hall, based on the values and other Christian themes such as 'My idea of heaven' with individual pictures assembled in the form of a cross, exemplify the school's Christian character. The values genuinely permeate all of school life with the Handful of Rules, the school's strategy for behaviour management, also based on them. Pupils use the question 'What would Jesus do/say?' when considering challenging situations and parents report that they hear much about the values, even being held to account themselves by their children for not showing a particular value at home. The school lives out the implications of its values in practical ways such as never giving up on anybody. There is a strong focus on the needs of all individuals with special emphasis on PP and vulnerable pupils seen as an aspect of the school's Christian distinctiveness. Support has been provided in core subjects and as a result standards have risen significantly over the last three years. All are encouraged to adopt a Growth Mindset within the context of the values so that they are prepared to embrace change. Staff have been supported to improve their teaching and expectations; there has been significant staff turnover but a committed and highly effective team has now been established. Behaviour and personal development are excellent with a strong focus on respect for others and support for the less able. Behaviour issues and their impact on achievement are increasingly discussed with reference to the Christian values and themes in Collective Worship. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all excellent as a result of the broad curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils benefit from a spacious building in an attractive rural setting. The school promotes self-esteem and confidence, recognising success and achievement in celebration assemblies. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to learn within its caring, tolerant and cooperative ethos. As a result relationships throughout the school community are positive and supportive. RE is enthusiastically led by the assistant head using the investigative Discovery Scheme to support the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus. Planning is thorough and creative. RE is seen as a high profile subject and is now taught through RE days which are popular with pupils. Six times a year a whole day is spent investigating a series of questions relating to a topic. The whole class' work is mounted in a class RE Big Book at the end of the day. These books provide an excellent record of work in RE throughout year and are used as the baseline for subsequent RE days. Work is assessed and progress rigorously tracked and monitored showing that standards are rising in line with those in other key subjects. RE contributes significantly to pupils' understanding of Christian beliefs and the life and work of Jesus as well as their knowledge of other faiths and cultures. Staff are aware of the need to foster their pupils' awareness of religious and cultural diversity given the school's mainly white British demographic and the underlying values of respect and tolerance ensure enthusiasm for learning about different faiths and customs. Visitors bring diversity into the school and there are plans for visits to different places of worship to complement a visit to Christchurch Cathedral. The school council gives opportunities for taking responsibility and pupils are involved in various forms of raising money for charitable causes. There are other opportunities for older pupils such as becoming Playground Pals or buddies for younger pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship is central to school life. It is relevant to everyday issues and important in relating the values which shape behaviour, relationships and attitudes to Christian teaching. Pupils are enthusiastic about worship and its impact permeates school life. Whole school worship takes place three times a week with visitors (parish priest, other clergy or lay leaders) leading it once a week. Children gather in silence as each class brings a symbolic object to contribute to the worship table (cross, bible, candle, rock, plant and dove – the first three representing the Trinity) and older pupils escort their Foundation Stage buddies. Worship starts with a liturgical response, linking the school's worship to the Anglican tradition, and includes a variety of elements, music, stories, one to one discussion, drama, prayer, silence and reflection, to which pupils and staff respond reverently. Teachers attend worship with their classes and teaching assistants and other members of staff also attend regularly, thus ensuring its impact on the whole community. Worship on the remaining days of the week is in class or key stage groups led by

pupils on a rota and based on the monthly values. This results in a greater sense of pupil involvement and ownership. One child said, 'I love teaching what we know about the value'. Collective worship is efficiently planned and coordinated by the head and her assistant. Theological teaching occurs mainly through the medium of collective worship with a strong focus on Bible stories and the life and person of Jesus although sometimes worship focuses on the festivals of other faiths. There are strong links with the nearby parish church. Regular services reflecting key points in the liturgical year now offer meaningful worship opportunities rather than performances and are attended by parents and the wider community. Pupils are confident and articulate in speaking about prayer and write their own. Each class has a bound book of prayers written by the class and used as grace before lunch while another prayer, written annually by pupils, is used regularly as the school prayer. All pupils know the Lord's Prayer and a decorative prayer tree stands in the reception area. The Prayer Space event is powerful in giving further opportunities to the whole school for exploring prayer. There are reflective areas in each classroom and the spiritual garden outside is decorated with prayer flags; these carry prayers written by the pupils and blessed by the parish priest. There is a strong emphasis on exploring the spiritual aspect of SMSC development. Special events are celebrated in memorable ways with an outdoor Easter trail and a donkey-led nativity procession through the village while a 'travelling' nativity set brings the Christmas story into as many homes as possible. Thorough monitoring and evaluation of the worship by the head and governors results in development shaped by pupil opinion.

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

The school has seen significant changes since September 2012. The new head has led development of a significantly more explicit Christian distinctiveness, changing the school from 'cosy and comfortable, to aspirational and driven' in helping all pupils to fulfil their potential within a distinctive Christian ethos. Standards of attainment have risen significantly across the board. Since the last inspection, governors have become much more aware of the implications of the SIAMS agenda and have been increasingly proactive in challenging school leaders and considering Christian distinctiveness as an important factor in the school's identity and success. It is now an agenda item for all governing body meetings and part of the head's reports to governors and the school's self-evaluation and development planning. As a result all areas for development from the last report have been met and exceeded. Governors and school leaders regularly carry out monitoring of all aspects of school life and act on what they find. Significant changes among the governors have resulted in a more focused and committed team and staff turnover has also resulted finally in a strong staff team whose members are well supported through professional training and opportunities for mentoring and consultation. As a result, long-standing members of staff are enthusiastic about changes that they have experienced and the strengthened Christian ethos with support offered through induction and other professional training. Both leadership and management are aware of the need for succession planning throughout school life but especially in maintaining Christian distinctiveness and are actively setting up systems which should survive changes in personnel. Parents are very positive about the school and its emphasis on the Christian ethos; they feel welcome in school and confident that any problems which arise will be sensitively and effectively managed. One parent (among many) wrote 'I'm very grateful for the specific Christian influence that my daughter receives and the questions that it makes her ask'. Concerted efforts have been made to improve communication with parents through the weekly newsletter which is overt in declaring the Christian values and ethos. Links with the local church are strong, reciprocal and beneficial at many levels with displays of work in the church as well as a regular slot, often faith-based, in the village magazine. The longstanding school logo links school, church and village and pupils are able to explain its significance. The school stands at the heart of the village community and secular links with the local community include the Wednesday Club for older residents as well as serving soup lunches in the village. The school's annual community day sees each class doing something of value to the village such as cleaning the churchyard. There are beneficial links with the local school partnership and particularly with the diocese and other successful church schools.