

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Ebbe's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Whitehouse Road

Oxford

OX1 4NA

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Date of last inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008

School's unique reference number: 123212

Headteacher: Susie Bagnall

Inspector's name and number: Ian Lewis 629

#### School context

St Ebbe's is a multi-ethnic and multi-faith primary school with 300 children on roll, situated near the centre of Oxford and serving the parishes of St Ebbe's and St Matthew's. It is a very popular, over-subscribed school and plans are well advanced for it to increase to two-form entry.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Ebbe's as a Church of England school are outstanding

Extremely strong and clear-sighted leadership by the headteacher working in very close partnership with the foundation governors, staff, parents and children has ensured the continuing development of a school with Christianity at the core of its life. The school's strong Christian values are clearly practised by all in its community, creating an ethos in which its children develop spiritually, socially and educationally. Regular and rigorous self-evaluation by the school's leadership provides a firm basis for its continuing development and improvement.

#### Established strengths

- Strong and inspirational leadership by the head teacher supported by highly dedicated staff and governors.
- A clear and distinctly Christian vision for the school based on Biblical values.
- An extremely strong partnership with the parish churches and their clergy.

#### Focus for development

- Further develop strategies in the marking of pupils' work in religious education to include the use of probing questions to challenge their thinking still further.

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

Extremely strong and distinctly Christian values are at the heart of the entire life of this school which are known, understood and lived by all in its community. They are clearly visible in the behaviour and attitudes of the children who show great care and respect for all and for the world around them. They take great pride in this saying: "This is a happy place where everybody's welcomed!" and, significantly, "Our values are related to Jesus' teaching". Parents strongly echo this, speaking warmly of the school's caring ethos, describing how the older pupils enjoy looking after the younger ones, remarking that the school engenders a "sense of responsibility" in their children. They go on to speak of the love and care shown to all by the staff saying, "The teachers show real commitment to each child". They describe the learning assistants as "fantastic", being regarded by the children as friends. Parents say too that they greatly appreciate the head teacher greeting each child by name at the school gate each morning, making all feel welcome. The children clearly enjoy being at school, this being confirmed through discussion with both them and their parents and also through the school's excellent record of attendance. St Ebbe's welcomes children with a range of needs, these being identified and met through a range of strategies including individual classroom support and nurturing groups. It is also a school with children from a large range of faiths and cultures. Both the children and their parents describe how this enriches their life and learning at school, a typical remark by parents being, "The children are really excited about different cultures and learning about them!" a view echoed by the children themselves. The pupils have a very strong voice within the school. They say that they know they are valued and that they are listened to by adults within the school, their views being acted upon when appropriate. The student council is consulted on a range of issues and contributes positively to the school management's decision-making process. Pupils have, for example, redesigned the school's logo to reflect both its church status and its multicultural character and they decide on charities for the school's fund-raising activities. The spiritual development of the children is well supported through opportunities provided for reflection and prayer throughout the day. They have created prayer books containing prayers representing all faiths which are displayed in the hall and are used for worship. Pupils are clearly developing a good understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer, saying "It's talking to God". A young Key Stage 1 child also describes it as "Making friends with someone you can't see!" The spiritual development of the whole school is further enhanced through its very strong partnership with the local churches and their clergy by means of worship and pastoral care. In response to the previous inspection, Christian symbols are clearly in evidence throughout the school and these, together with Anglican ritual experienced through involvement with the churches, ensure that the spiritual development of the pupils is further supported and enhanced.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship is extremely important in the life of the school as it strongly affirms and strengthens the Christian values at its core. St Ebbe's is a multicultural and multi-faith school and evidence from discussion with the pupils, parents, staff and governors shows that all in its community feel included and affirmed through its acts of worship. The children say how much they enjoy this time of each day, describing it as "calm and relaxing" and also describing enthusiastically how they frequently take an active part. This enjoyment was clearly evidenced in the act of worship observed which was attended by the whole school community. The children eagerly took part in discussion with the leader, answering questions knowledgeably and confidently, they listened avidly to the story which they also helped to present, they sang superbly and prayed reverently. Throughout there was the real sense that this was a religious service. Worship is meticulously planned by the worship and religious education co-ordinators together with the clergy of both parishes and is based principally on the school's Christian values together with the Church's year and principal festivals. Flexibility is provided to cater for major events in the wider world. Discussion with staff, children and parents together with evidence in the school's planning and record keeping files shows that the pupils have regular opportunities to plan and lead worship themselves. The quality of worship and its impact on the children is rigorously monitored and evaluated by senior staff and the foundation governors. This is achieved through the formal observation of acts of worship together with questionnaires and discussion with the pupils and parents. Staff also observe, report on and discuss the impact of worship on the children. The resulting evaluations are discussed by staff and governors and inform subsequent stages of planning. Through the close involvement of the parishes' clergy in worship and religious education, together with regular visits by the pupils to the churches for both worship and curriculum enrichment, the children are developing a good knowledge of Anglican faith, tradition and practice.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Religious education clearly occupies an extremely important place within the school's curriculum. It is taught principally as a discrete subject, particularly within Key Stage 2. Cross-curricular links are used when appropriate. Planning is meticulous, drawing on the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus as a basis. Under the strong leadership of the subject co-ordinator, detailed teaching packs have been developed which firmly support the teachers' subject knowledge and ensure appropriate differentiation in teaching methods to cater for the wide range of pupils in each class. The children say that they thoroughly enjoy the subject, this being confirmed in discussion with parents. This enjoyment was very evident in the two good lessons observed, one in each Key Stage. In both the children were totally absorbed and involved in their learning and good, searching questions continually challenged their thinking. Discussion was observed to be used very effectively as a learning strategy both in groups and as a class. Pupils are encouraged to gauge their own learning through knowing the learning objectives of every lesson, the teachers using a variety of strategies during lessons to ensure this is happening. In this multi-faith school, the pupils particularly enjoy discovering about the major faiths, parents confirming this, saying that their children are "excited" by this aspect of religious education. Learning is enriched by regular visits not only to Anglican places of worship but to those of the other major faiths and pupils are eager to share their own beliefs and practices with others in the class in the course of lessons. The monitoring and evaluation of the subject by the school is rigorous. Under the leadership of the co-ordinator and head teacher, lessons are evaluated and pupils' work is scrutinised, their individual achievements being carefully tracked and, through curriculum management software, graded and compared to those in the other core subjects. Evidence seen from this process shows that overall, children are making outstanding progress in RE. The marking of work is thorough with relevant comments made by the teachers. However, marking shows insufficient use of questions to challenge the children's thinking still further.

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

Inspirational leadership by the head teacher working in close partnership with the team of highly motivated staff and governors has ensured the creation of a strong vision for St Ebbe's based on firm and distinctly Christian values, created largely by the children and strongly related to Biblical teaching. The impact of these on the school's community is rigorously monitored and evaluated by the foundation governors, head teacher and senior staff working closely with the pupils and parents. Pupils are enabled to take a very active part in school management through the student council. Parents are very keen to speak of how matters relating to the school's development are discussed with them through the parents' forum, a vehicle created for discussion between them and the senior managers. From formal surveys of all stakeholders, the foundation governors evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of St Ebbe's as an Anglican school on its community. The results of evaluation are discussed by the governing body and subsequently inform development planning. The school's leaders place great importance on the professional, personal and spiritual development of staff and governors, this being clearly linked to succession planning. An extremely strong and beneficial partnership had been formed with the local parish churches and their clergy who play a very active role in the life of the school. This, in turn, further strengthens the school's distinctive Anglican character.