

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

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

Whitehouse Road Oxford OX1 4NA	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Oxford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Date of inspection	1 February 2018
Date of last inspection	February 2013
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Aided Primary 123212
Headteacher	Susie Bagnall
Inspector's name and number	Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Currently there are 350 pupils on roll at St Ebbe's who come from a variety of faith backgrounds and none. There is a high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. In addition there is a high proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding or who are vulnerable or have special educational needs as well as those pupils for whom English is an additional language. The percentage of girl pupils is low. There have been significant staffing changes since the previous denominational inspection. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the religious education [RE] subject leader are all very well established and experienced members of staff.

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

- This nurturing and inclusive, yet richly diverse, Christian community serves the pupils and their families as well as the staff at St Ebbe's very well.
- The Christian vision, leadership and huge investment of the headteacher and her dedicated and committed staff and governors ensure that all groups of pupils, especially the most vulnerable, make good progress.
- The passionate and enthusiastic RE subject leader supports staff in their enjoyment and confidence in teaching RE. Consequently, pupils are excited and challenged by this core subject.
- The partnership with the churches enriches the worshipping life of this school community.

#### Areas to improve

- Enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith to enrich pupils' global awareness.
- Extend the programme of visits and visitors in RE to enrich pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Enrich pupils' good level of religious literacy by giving them a language by which they can

confidently articulate the key concepts which are explicit to different world faiths and none.

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

St Ebbe's is a school where everybody is accepted and nurtured for who they are. As such, it serves the pupils, their families and all the staff very well. This is because the values of respect, equality, compassion, responsibility, wonder, trust and courage enable this school community to learn, grow and flourish. The school's vision and mission affirms that all are unique and loved by God. Consequently, relationships and behaviour are good. Collective worship and RE both make good contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. In addition, these two key areas both contribute well to their personal and academic development and to the Christian character of the school. This is attributed to the importance of Christian faith in a school which has values at its heart. In this church school community the pupils know that each day is a fresh start and they are forgiven. The school firmly believes that all pupils can, and will make, progress. 18 months ago the focus was in the main tilted towards vulnerable pupils. Now St Ebbe's is seeing the tangible impact of this focus in the accelerated progress for the most vulnerable pupils. The leadership is firmly committed to getting it right pedagogically for these pupils, then 'the focus for teaching and learning will be right for everyone'. Assessment data at the end of last term showed this to be true, with all pupils across all age groups making progress. Furthermore, a trained child play therapist was appointed to work full time in the school. This ensures working closely with families for social, emotional and mental health support so that academically pupils can flourish. Whilst attendance for vulnerable pupils is lower than for other pupils, a key member of staff is working hard to engage families and provides extra support when these pupils are in school. Other senior members of staff are champions for those eligible for additional support. These include those for whom English is an additional language or those who have special education needs or are vulnerable in some way. As one pupil said, 'We are all treated as equals here.' This extends to creative musical and sporting activities and includes the exceptional opportunity for all vulnerable pupils to learn to play an instrument. The Erasmus Project enables pupils to accompany their teachers to Romania, thus enriching their global horizons. In RE lessons, shared themes are explored between Islam and Christianity, such as 'people of the Book', including Ibrahim, Ishmael and Isaac. Pupils respect 'what God and Jesus did for world peace'. However, the Christian distinctiveness of the school is not yet outstanding. This is because pupils say they would like to learn more about Christianity worldwide which the school has already identified as an area for development to enrich pupils' global awareness.

**The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Collective worship, known as assembly here, is an important part of school life and enjoyed by adults and pupils alike. Parents, staff and governors all draw inspiration from worship. This is varied in its approach and has an emphasis on key festivals in the church year and biblical teaching. This is because there are close links with nearby St Matthew's Church as well as St Ebbe's. The pattern of worship includes church services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. Pupils are encouraged to pray and reflect as well as lead worship, which is well attended by parents. Pupils say they would like more occasions when they can plan and lead worship. Classes plan and lead worship, with each class given an element of the Christian story to share in church services. Student Council also lead worship in school on charity work and inspire fellow pupils on how they can make a difference in the world. Currently the student council's views are sought to help inform the school's evaluation of worship and the impact it is making. This is fed back to governors. A focus on the value of wonder impressed church leaders, who lead worship fortnightly in school, as it challenged pupils and adults significantly about what it means to cultivate wonder. Such values are driven by a Christian understanding of being good stewards of God's creation. When worship had a focus on Piero

della Francesca's 'Baptism of Christ', this resonated with pupils whose family come from Italy. It also inspired a member of staff to request to be baptised by the vicar of St Matthew's Church. Worship always affirms that everyone is unique and loved by God. The clergy are keen to teach the school community accurately and not hide Jesus's divinity. Pupils say, 'We learn about God and how all the stories are linked to values. It helps us learn how we can become more like God and Jesus. Pupils can explain The Holy Trinity in their own words, including those who would say they are of no faith. For example, they describe, 'The Spirit is the part of the trinity that lives inside us. Jesus is the one who helps let it in and God helps us to understand it.' Pupils confirm that their vicar illustrates the trinity to denote the three parts of God by juggling every fortnight. Pupils enjoy writing their own prayers and say they would like to do this more frequently. One pupil believes, 'The Lord's Prayer sums up most things'. They enjoy worship outdoors and cite commemorating Remembrance-tide by 'holding hands on the school field'. Collective worship is not yet outstanding. This is because areas for ongoing development include developing reflection time before prayer as well as enabling pupils to work more closely with the church community.

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

RE at St Ebbe's excites and challenges pupils and has a very positive profile. This is because pupils 'love RE and being made to think'. As a result, some pupils are exceeding expectations in RE, with monitoring demonstrating the high quality of teaching and learning in RE. Staff enjoy teaching RE. This is because the RE subject leader is passionate about her subject and very committed to RE. For example, she is an associate governor, and attends training, regularly reporting to governors as well as supporting colleagues. Progression and creativity in RE is celebrated, within lessons and also through displays around the school. For example, Year 6 pupils produced a video interviewing a Christian pupil in their class as well as interviewing a Muslim member of staff. Pupils for whom English is not their first language are encouraged to become experts in cross curricular work, which does not always include a written task. This helps them understand their own religion and appreciate others more. However, St Ebbe's are currently moderating assessment in RE with another school in Oxford. Whilst assessment is in place, next steps include a focus on assessing what greater depth looks like. Pupils can relate the Christian narrative very well and know about St Matthew and St Ebbe to whom their churches and school are dedicated. Belonging to a faith community and respect for all faiths and none are well articulated, with reference to the importance of pilgrimage for many faiths. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils speak of pilgrimage as 'the journey is more important than the actual place you go to'. They go on to praise pilgrimage as 'giving God your full attention and as a time to think'. Pupils like to ask big questions, such as, 'What was Jesus like?' They say they would like to learn more about Christians and Muslims around the world and 'how they love to pray'. RE is not yet outstanding because the school needs to extend the programme of visits and visitors to enrich the pupils' spiritual and cultural development. In addition, they need to develop a language that enables them to articulate key concepts and beliefs across all faiths and none. Both of these have been identified and acknowledged by the school as areas to develop.

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

This whole community believes in the core purpose of the school, in that every child is unique and special and loved by God. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. Parents want their children to learn about faith. The result of an away day with the governing body 18 months ago was the development of a whole set of values to support and protect and maintain the school's Christian foundation. Values underpin the work of the governing body who carry out their tasks, including monitoring, in pairs. This assists them in their role and contributes to the bigger picture of how Christian distinctiveness drives all curriculum areas. For example, RE is monitored twice a year as are other subjects. The RE subject leader meets with the RE link governor termly, also in line with other subjects. RE and collective worship are always on governing body agendas. This ensures worship and RE are strategically planned and both are well led and managed and meet statutory requirements. Links with the diocese are very supportive, with the school, including staff and governors, benefitting from diocesan training. Links with local schools within the Cherwell partnership are also positive and chaired by the

headteacher. How the school might be taking a lead through such networks, including sharing good practice, has been identified as an area to be developed. The headteacher is very successful in developing newly qualified teachers as well as middle leaders. This is because structures are in place in this school where wellbeing is a priority, with a clergy governor chairing the wellbeing committee. Community links are good, with the choir singing and supporting charity events. Parents value the church being part of the family. This results in good attendance at church services by Christian parents as well as those of other faiths. Parents speak highly of the headteacher who 'knows every child by name' and praise 'such dedicated staff' especially nurturing every vulnerable child. Happy staff create a very positive culture who also feel supported in their roles, including those in their first year of teaching. They affirm, 'The school is a family and we support and care for all, we are all treated as individuals and accepted as we are'.

SIAMS report February 2018 St Ebbe's CE VA Primary School Oxford OX1 4NA