



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Lower Park Street
Cambridge
CB5 8AR

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Date of inspection: 1 July 2014

Dates of last inspection: 29 June and 2 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 110837

Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Owen

Inspector's name and number: Mr David Bunkell QA assessor: Mrs Rosemary Privett 321

School context

The school is in central Cambridge, attended by 117 pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. Most live locally. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are above average. The school is directly associated with the parish of St Mary the Great, and has links with other churches, including nearby St Clement's, the parish in which the school is situated. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is substantially below the national average. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good

- This is a very happy and successful school, with caring and highly-supportive relationships between all in the school community, firmly based on the Christian ethos that permeates every aspect of the school's work.
- Staff are excellent role models, clearly living out Christian ideals in their caring for every pupil, including those who are vulnerable.
- The governors know the school extremely well, and are highly supportive of its Christian distinctiveness and of all that staff do for the benefit of the pupils.

Areas to improve

- Establish rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of religious education [RE] and collective worship, by pupils, by parents and carers, and by governors.
- Improve teachers' assessment of work in RE, in order to track the progress of pupils across a key stage and to enable each pupil to appreciate success and know how to improve their work.
- Provide opportunities for individual and shared prayer and reflection to take place at times and in places in addition to scheduled assemblies.

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

Christian values are evident in all areas of school life, enabling this to be a truly inclusive school, in which all are made welcome and enabled to reach their full potential. As a result, at the end of the early years foundation stage and each key stage, attainment is broadly in line with or above national expectations. Good progress is made by most groups of pupils, including the most vulnerable. The Christian character of the school has a clear link with approaches to attendance and exclusions, with every effort made to support each child. Pupil behaviour is generally exemplary, as pupils are seen genuinely to care for one another. Younger pupils appreciate that they have older 'buddies', who in turn happily serve in this capacity. Most pupils are aware of the school's Christian values, successfully make links to Biblical teaching, and are grateful for the Christ-like care and concern shown to all, regardless of their background, faith or ability. The quality of the pupils' personal and cultural development is enhanced by the Christian ethos of the school. The school maximises the opportunities available in Cambridge to visit museums and galleries, and the places of worship used by other faiths, such as a nearby synagogue. Pupils also benefit from attending educational events at Ely Cathedral. They understand that Christianity is a multi-cultural faith. Adults demonstrate that spirituality is clearly defined, and its development carefully nurtured in each pupil, for example in two recent projects based on spirituality in art. Although the school has no playing fields, the pupils enjoy the daily visits to nearby Jesus Green, enabling them to play and to develop positive relationships. Pupils show awareness of the diversity of those who live in Cambridge, for example showing concern for the needs of local homeless people. They participate actively and keenly in fundraising for local, national and international charities, and are involved in choosing which charities to support.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship holds a place of importance in the life of the school. Pupils' attitudes to worship are good because themes are relevant and contribute greatly to their spiritual development. They appreciate the variety of approaches to worship. Pupils and staff participate in the daily acts of collective worship in the school hall, singing hymns and religious songs, hearing Bible readings, taking part in drama and writing prayers. School services are held in the church four times each year, appreciated by pupils and their parents or carers. This is enabling pupils to develop a good understanding of the cycle of the church year and aspects of Anglican faith and practice. Through appropriate themes and topics in worship, pupils show that they are able to discuss the relevance of famous people to their lives, for example Mother Teresa, particularly significant to them, having lived comparatively recently. Worship is specifically Christian, beginning with a pupil lighting a candle placed next to a wooden cross, while leading a greeting and response. Through this daily action, pupils develop an understanding of religious symbolism, associating the candle with Jesus as the light of the world. Pupils also benefit from the way in which the school's Christian values are reinforced in worship. Time is allowed for personal prayer or reflection, developing pupils' spirituality. Prayers are read during worship, sometimes written by pupils themselves, but opportunities for prayer or contemplation at other times of day or in other places are limited. Participants in worship show a clear understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with due focus on Jesus Christ. They are able to define eloquently, the work of the Holy Spirit, aided by recent celebrations of Pentecost. In response to areas for development from the last inspection, the pattern of worship now follows the church's year and associated themes. It is carefully planned by the headteacher and vicar, reinforcing the links between church and school. Several staff and visitors lead worship sessions, including clergy. Governors often attend worship, but do not play a monitoring role; neither are the pupils' views on the effectiveness of worship actively sought, for example through the school council.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The teaching of RE has a high profile within the school, and pupils express with clarity how work in RE is directly linked to their behaviour and attitudes. The quality of the teaching of RE is good, with teachers demonstrating excellent subject knowledge, and clearly knowing their pupils' capabilities very well. The quality of learning is consequently also good. Pupils' achievements in RE are good. Younger pupils understand the importance of religious books, and can name several of the books used by different religions. Older pupils show high levels of knowledge, and are able to discuss religious concepts with sophistication, suggesting for example that religious teaching must be presented even more convincingly in a university environment, and speculating that living in Cambridge may cause people to question everything more profoundly, including religious and philosophical matters. Pupils enjoy RE lessons, and can speak fluently about their own faith, whether or not Christian. Through this, they develop skills of discussion, enquiry and reflection, even at a young age. A wide range of resources and artefacts are used to enhance learning, such as setting up the classroom as a Gurdwara for a lesson on Sikhism. The curriculum for RE is effective, based on the local authority's agreed syllabus that was introduced last year, but giving the flexibility for the school to design some units of work, enabling the due prominence that is given to teaching about Christianity. RE is timetabled in blocks alongside humanities subjects, but often pervades work in other subjects, for example English and art. Until recently the co-ordination of the teaching of RE was led and managed by the headteacher, but this has now been delegated to another teacher. Her leadership is clearly already helping to support and enthuse colleagues to drive standards even higher. Teaching and learning are monitored through lesson observation by senior staff, and feedback given to help raise standards. Some assessment of pupils' work takes place, linked to national expectations, but as yet this is embryonic. Pupils' progress is not specifically tracked, and they are not made explicitly aware on a regular basis of how they can improve their work in RE. The current systems for assessment do not give a clear picture of how pupils progress across a key stage.

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

All those responsible for the leadership and management of the school express very clearly the Christian ethos of the school, welcoming people of all faiths and none. This creates a warm and friendly environment, in which pupils are enabled to achieve their best. The well-being of all in the school is of paramount importance. Staff are excellent role models, and all relationships are built on mutual respect. All in the school have benefited from the externally-led spirituality projects that have taken place in each of the last three years, as staff have reflected in depth about how opportunities for spiritual development can be enhanced and how an appreciation of spirituality affects approaches to teaching and learning, specifically in RE. Self-evaluation by leaders is detailed and insightful, and is directly linked to constant striving for ever higher standards. Leaders are making effective plans for succession, for example with the devolution of the role of RE coordination to another teacher. Governors are highly supportive of the leaders of RE and worship. The governors know the school very well. The foundation governors meet as a discrete committee to ensure that some aspects of the Christian character of the school are discussed, maintained and developed, but the governors' strategic role in monitoring and evaluating is less well developed. Since the previous SIAS inspection, links with Great St Mary's Church have been strengthened in many ways, with the vicar becoming a foundation governor and some pupils singing in a church choir. Clergy lead worship sessions in school weekly. This is much appreciated by the pupils and reinforces the Christian ethos of the school. Beneficial partnerships are strong with the other church schools in Cambridge, and also with those in the wider diocese, including staff training and the sharing of good practice. All of this has a positive impact on the pupils because the quality of teaching is boosted by these links. The vast majority of parents and carers are appreciative of all that the school does for their children, and some parents of other faiths or none have specifically chosen this school because of its evident Christian values.

SIAMS report July 2014 Park Street Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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