



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Christ Church CE Primary School

47a Brick Lane
Spitalfields
London E1 6PU

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: London

Local authority: Tower Hamlets

Dates of inspection: 12 June 2015

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 100944

Headteacher: Julian Morant

Inspector's name and number: John Viner NS144

School context

Christ Church is a one-form entry primary school located in Brick Lane and serving the parish of Christ Church, Spitalfields. Its 190 pupils reflect the rich diversity of the area. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The majority of pupils are of non-British heritage, with the largest group from Bangladesh. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs or disabilities. Since most pupils are Muslim, only a handful attend church. Pupils make good progress, often from a low base. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages. When Ofsted last inspected the school, in 2012, it was judged to be good overall. At that time, it was part of a federation with another church school but that relationship has now ceased.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The Christian values, which are at the heart of the school, underpin every aspect of its work and promote high quality relationships between and among all stakeholders.
- The central role of Collective Worship and prayer makes this a place where faith is valued and spirituality nurtured.
- Improvements in RE since the last inspection have renewed pupils' interest so that they are excited by it and make good progress.
- The ambitious Christian vision for the school that is shared by the headteacher, leaders and governors has made it a pivotal hub of the community that it serves.

Areas to improve

- Review the mission statement and admissions policy to better reflect the renewed focus on the promotion of the school's Christian character in a multi-cultural context.
- Review the RE curriculum to ensure that pupils leave with a secure knowledge of key faiths that equips them for the next stage in their education.

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

Christian values lie at the heart of the school and visibly underpin all aspects of its work. The recent introduction of a systematic approach to teaching specific Christian values over the school year has done much to establish their importance. Pupils and parents say that this provides a clear focus for each term and finds an echo in all faiths and none. Pupils know that they are safe, valued and special and are keen to come to school where they behave excellently and make good progress from their starting points. This is seen in the rising standards of pupil achievement and in the excellent, trusting relationships between and among adults and pupils and between parents and staff. Parents say that this is 'an unusually loving place' where their children thrive. There is a strong sense of shared commitment by all staff, regardless of their faith or beliefs and this ensures that this is a cohesive learning community where pupils develop a confident spirituality and compassion for others. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its Christian distinctiveness and is aware of the key place it occupies in the diverse community that it serves, although this is not yet reflected in the admissions policy. This high focus on and celebration of diversity ensures that the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength, whether they are Christian, of other faiths or of none. Religious education plays a key role in promoting the school's Christian character so that pupils' faith is nurtured and they appreciate each other's beliefs. As a result they leave the school with a deep appreciation of diversity and the relevance of faith in a modern society.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Daily collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. Pupils say that they look forward to it, that it is fun and that it helps them to understand both Christian belief and practice and deepen their own faith. Whether it takes place in the school or in the parish church, worship is carefully planned around the Christian value that is the focus for the term. It is always distinctively Anglican, Biblical and focused on the person of Jesus. Through worship, all pupils develop a clear understanding that Christians regard God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is evident that, when the whole school community assembles for worship, there is a shared sense of anticipation, which leads to the enthusiastic participation of adults and pupils alike. A variety of leaders, including parish clergy and staff, ensure that worship is kept fresh and interesting so that pupils say how much they look forward to what the next session will bring. The majority of pupils say that they love the singing, relishing the frequent opportunities to sign the words as well as sing them. Sometimes worship is especially moving, such as the focus on the Nepal earthquake that stirred pupils' compassion. Sometimes it is adventurous: parents and pupils still speak of the 'living nativity' procession last Christmas, which attracted the interest of the whole community and is still of local interest. Leaders, clergy and governors monitor and evaluate the impact of worship on the school community in order to sustain its fresh appeal. Prayer is threaded through the school, both in worship and at other times of the day, so that pupils of all faiths learn the nature and purpose of prayer, often writing their own. There are also many opportunities for pupils' personal reflection so that they can commit their private concerns to prayer. Parents of all faiths say how much they welcome the way that their children's personal faith is nurtured. They value the contribution that worship makes to their children's lives and to their family life. They say that the values that the school promotes through worship are those that represent all that is good and wholesome and will equip their children for life.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Since the last inspection the school has invested time and resources in improving RE. The high profile of the subject and the shared commitment of leaders and staff give it a value that underpins the whole curriculum. Pupils achieve increasingly high standards in RE, often from low starting points so that attainment is in line with expectations. They are excited by it and

say that teachers make it interesting and fun. Teaching is generally good and work seen in books suggests that sometimes it is outstanding. Pupils say that, because they have friends of many faiths, they really like learning about other people's faiths and beliefs. Teachers have good knowledge to enable them to teach the subject effectively and the school leaders have ensured that training is readily available. At the moment, written work in RE is justifiably linked with the school's focus on developing pupils' writing skills. This means that, sometimes, teachers mark the English but do not respond to the RE, which limits their appreciation of what pupils learn about religion. Nevertheless, the class RE books provide an effective record of what pupils have learnt from religion and how they apply their learning to their lives. The RE curriculum draws on a scheme of work that helps to make the subject engaging. Although there is a good balance of Christianity and other faiths, the present arrangements of topics is not always sufficiently cohesive and progressive. While pupils develop a strong understanding of Christianity and aspects of other faiths, by the end of their time in school, they do not always have the high levels of secure knowledge for which there is the potential. Their personal understanding of faith and what they learn from religion is very good. RE is strongly led by the headteacher and deputy head who have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the subject and of the priorities for improvement. Leaders have high expectations of RE and this is steadily driving further improvement.

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

Since the last inspection the school has taken on a new strategic direction under the leadership of the headteacher and a new governing body. The rich and ambitious Christian vision that they share for the school is driving rapid improvement and making the school a place where faith is valued and belief is nurtured. Leaders and governors have a clear sense of the school's place in the wider community it serves and sustain their shared vision through highly effective self-evaluation. They are proud of the school's Christian distinctiveness, although the existing mission statement does not quite capture the strength of their renewed vision. Recent changes to the curriculum have ensured that it is informed by Christian values and makes a significant contribution to pupils' attitudes to learning. The high profile of RE and worship and the excellent leadership of both, contribute strongly to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is because of the determination of headteacher, leaders and governors that pupils make good academic and personal progress. There is an excellent close and productive relationship with the parish church and with the wider community. These community links are remarkable in their mutual benefit to school and community. There are many links with local businesses who support the school in various ways, This is a school that is widely recognised for its Christian identity in a multi-faith context that draws the community together. Parents of all faiths celebrate their shared friendships that begin in the school and continue outside. The school is outstanding in promoting community harmony and in preparing its pupils for the challenges of living in modern Britain. Excellent community use is made of the school buildings, particularly the new and impressive early years building. The strong partnership with the parish church is encouraging school families into the life of the church, while both clergy and the parish children's worker are active in the school. This adds significant capacity to the school through activities for pupils and the chaplaincy clergy provide for the school community, which includes running a regular support prayer group. Parents say that the 'physical space of the school is very special. They have great faith in the school and its leaders and recognise the many recent improvements. They hold the headteacher in high esteem, respect him and trust his judgements. They say 'we are all getting behind the values' and this is a testimony to the work that the school is doing to be a beacon of Christian love in the community.

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