



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Sutton Courtenay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Bradstock's Way
Sutton Courtenay
Abingdon
OX14 4DA

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire

Dates of inspection: 21 May 2015

Date of last inspection: 15 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 123162

Headteacher: Alison Ashcroft

Inspector's name and number: Ian Lewis 629

School context

Sutton Courtenay is a small school with 139 pupils on roll serving the village and surrounding area. Since the last inspection it has undergone a period of rapid growth and is currently in the process of expanding further. The children, mostly white British, are from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds. A strong and mutually beneficial partnership has been established with the parish church, its clergy and community.

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

This is because:

- An exceptionally clear, strong and vibrant ethos firmly embedded in Christian values has been established in which the pupils thrive academically and personally.
- Very strong, Christian leadership by the head teacher in partnership with committed governors and a dedicated staff enables Sutton Courtenay to continuously develop and strengthen as an Anglican school.
- An extremely firm and mutually beneficial partnership has been established with the parish church, its clergy and community which enhances and strengthens the school's Anglican character.
- The strong, caring Christian ethos together with the impeccable example set by adults within the school produces well behaved, respectful and mutually supportive children who have a real desire to learn and achieve.

Areas to improve

- To further enrich its impact on the children, devise and implement strategies for them to have regular opportunities to plan and lead collective worship independently.

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

Sutton Courtenay School has, at its heart, an exceptionally intense and vibrant ethos. This is based firmly on very strong and distinctly Christian values which are securely grounded in Biblical teaching, particularly that of Jesus Christ. The whole school community clearly lives its entire life by these values. The impact of this is evidenced most strongly in the excellent behaviour and attitudes of the children and in the love and care shown to all by the adults who are outstanding exemplars. Parents speak warmly of the school's strong moral code saying 'The children are taught how to respect and care for each other'. In particular they describe with obvious pleasure how the older children enjoy helping and caring for the younger ones. They also say that the Christian values are so much part of their children's lives that they influence their attitudes at home and in the wider community. Pupils enjoy attending school, this being clearly evidenced in their enthusiastic comments echoed by those of parents who say 'Our children hate being away from school!' The caring and nurturing ethos creates among the pupils a real desire and eagerness to learn and achieve to the best of their individual abilities. This is evidenced in discussion with pupils and parents and also in the school's records of progress and achievement. RE contributes very strongly to this positive attitude to learning, children and staff saying how much they enjoy the stimulating variety of approaches such as drama, music and discussion. This is further enriched by the input of the parish church and in particular the vicar who plays a very active role in both the planning and delivery of the subject employing imaginative approaches such as Godly Play. Discussion with parents, children and teachers gives evidence that strong, targeted care and support is given to pupils with particular needs who, as a result, make good progress across the curriculum. There is an extremely palpable sense of spirituality within this school. There are good opportunities throughout each day for prayer and reflection which are used well by the children. They say how much they enjoy the prayer spaces where they can offer their personal thoughts through their own prayers. As a direct result of good, effective RE teaching, collective worship and the close involvement of the vicar, pupils show clear evidence of a growing understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer. They enjoy these opportunities, a typical comment being: 'It makes me feel good to talk and send a message to God'. Linked to this there are abundant opportunities within the school's environment for quiet reflection including the allotment and garden areas. As a direct result of these, pupils experience the wonder of living and growing things and of caring for them. Through RE, collective worship and the partnership with the church, pupils are developing a good understanding of Christianity as a world faith. They are also developing a realisation of their roles and responsibilities within society. Their empathetic and compassionate attitude is clearly demonstrated in their support for appropriate charities throughout the year and especially in their spontaneous efforts to help those in great need such as the victims of the recent earthquake in Nepal.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship occupies a place of extreme importance at this school. It affirms and further strengthens the Christian values upon which the school's entire life is built through distinctly Christian teachings, particularly those of Jesus Christ. The strong moral content included in this reaches out to all in the school's community whatever their own faith, if any. This is evidenced in the care and love for all demonstrated by children and adults within the school. All are warmly included in worship and enjoy taking part. Parents say how much the children look forward to this aspect of the school day. This was clearly evidenced in the excellent whole school 'Open The Book' act of worship observed, led by the vicar and church members. It was approached with quiet reverence and avid expectation particularly by the children who then responded with clear enjoyment and enthusiasm, taking part in the acting and prayers and singing beautifully. Planning for collective worship is thorough, the co-ordinator and vicar working closely with staff and children through discussion of the planned themes. These strongly reflect the church's year and its festivals. Throughout there is a strong emphasis on the

person of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The children are developing a good understanding of the Trinity by activities such as a recent 'Pentecost Experience' held in the parish church. Pupils contribute to collective worship with enthusiasm and enjoyment. However, at the present time there are insufficient opportunities for them to plan and lead acts of worship independently. Parents say how much they enjoy attending and joining in with worship, particularly the weekly celebration assemblies and the services held in the church. Through the close involvement of the parish church in collective worship together with regular visits to the church for both worship and curriculum purposes, the children are developing a good understanding of the traditions and practices of the Anglican church. Both the quality of provision and the impact of collective worship is regularly and thoroughly evaluated by the school's leadership through discussion and questionnaires involving stakeholders. The results of this are discussed by governors leading to ongoing development, improvement and funding.

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

Leaders at Sutton Courtenay School have developed and established an extremely clear vision of this as a church school. This is securely based on distinctly Christian values which are firmly rooted in Biblical teaching, particularly that of Jesus Christ. The result is a rich and vibrant Christian ethos which drives the entire life and development of the school. It is most clearly evidenced in the excellent behaviour of the children and in the love and care for one another demonstrated by all in the school's community. The vision is widely promoted through the school's website and printed correspondence. As a result it is well known and greatly valued by all stakeholders. Its impact is regularly evaluated by school leaders through observation, discussion with stakeholders and questionnaires. As a result, parents and pupils in particular say that they feel involved in the school's ongoing development. The results of evaluation are employed by the school's leadership to inform the next stages of development in the overall strategic plan. Both staff and governors greatly benefit from carefully targeted professional and personal development. Leadership potential is identified and is nurtured through professional development ensuring that the Anglican distinctiveness of the school will continue to develop and flourish. Professional development further enhances the quality of the existing strong leadership of RE and collective worship leading to good provision and ongoing development in both areas. Provision of RE and collective worship meets current national requirements. An extremely strong and mutually beneficial partnership has been established with the parish church, its clergy and community. The impact of this is the high profile of the school's Anglican status within the locality, evidenced in comments by stakeholders and in regular articles concerning the school in the parish magazine. Pupils are eager to be involved in church activities, particularly the choir. As a result of this, an increased number of families are now attending church services. Discussion with stakeholders gives clear evidence that through these links, the children are developing a good understanding of the school's Anglican character and also of their roles and responsibilities as Christian members of the wider and global communities.