



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Marlow Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School

Sandygate Road
Marlow
Buckinghamshire
SL7 3AZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Dates of inspection: 5 May 2016

Date of last inspection: 12 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 110433

Headteacher: Julianna Hall

Inspector's name and number: Angela Wheatcroft Quality Assurance assessor: Jayne Pavlou 628

School context

Marlow Church of England Infant school is a popular school with 180 pupils on roll. There have been changes in school staff since the last inspection and the headteacher has been in post since September 2014. The number of pupils receiving SEN support or with a statement of special educational needs or education health and care plan is average. The numbers of pupils eligible for additional government funding through the pupil premium are below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Marlow Infants as a Church of England school are good

- The strong partnership between the school, church and parents which makes a significant contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The school's Christian values are distinct and explicit; this means that learners develop academically in a nurturing environment.
- Learners exhibit high standards of behaviour; they demonstrate that they are living the Christian values.

Areas to improve

- Develop the content of the religious education (RE) curriculum so that it is more creative and engaging for learners.
- Formalise governors' monitoring of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school so that areas of improvement are accurately identified.
- Develop learners' understanding of Christianity as a world-wide faith within the context of a multi-faith and diverse society so that learners have a deeper appreciation of the world in which they live.

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

of all learners

Marlow Church of England Infant school is a happy, caring Christian community where all learners are valued and made to feel special. The school demonstrates its Christian approach in that it is highly inclusive and serves all learners well. As a result, learners are seen as individuals and attain above national expectations in reading, writing and maths at the end of key stage 1. A core set of six distinctly Christian values have been chosen by the whole school community and most members recognise, and can express, the values of trust, respect, kindness, perseverance, forgiveness and thankfulness. As a consequence, the impact of these can be seen through the positive attitudes to learning that the whole school community has. Learners talk about their 'perseverance penguin' and this, along with the recently established growth mind-set programme, is creating an atmosphere of success. Parents quote instances where learners apply the values to what has happened at home. Relationships throughout the school are strong and this leads to all members of the school community being treated with mutual respect and understanding. Parents talk about the school as 'one big happy family' with the core Christian values being central to this. As a result, attendance is above national average and the behaviour of the learners is exemplary. Since the previous inspection, the establishment of meaningful classroom reflection areas, closely linked to the Christian values, provides learners with opportunities to develop spirituality, morally, socially and culturally (SMSC) within a Christian environment. However, the school does not yet have a highly developed interpretation of spirituality which is shared across the school community. Learners have some understanding of the importance of religious education in their lives and speak about respecting others from a different faith. The headteacher and governors have rightly identified that they need to increase the learners' awareness of the diversity of other cultures and faiths. As a result, the school has begun to establish links with a Christian school in Kenya. However, due to the infancy of these links, learners are not yet fully aware of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith. This is the reason why the school is not yet outstanding.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship is distinctively Christian in content and central to the daily life of the school. This means it is highly effective in promoting the school's Christian values. Worship themes are well planned and are rooted in scripture. Parents speak highly of their involvement with worship and how this impacts on the learners and on themselves. They commented that worship in the church and sharing assemblies are always well attended and that learners sing worship songs at home. Since the previous inspection, staff members have become much more involved in the leading and planning of worship and this has led to worship being inclusive for all. Learners speak enthusiastically about worship and have some understanding of Christian traditions. They understand that lighting the candle is representing Jesus as light of the world. Learners understand the importance of prayer and as a result they talk about how their lunchtime prayer helps them to remember children in other countries who do not have enough food. Due to the safe and caring nature of the school, learners have the confidence to pray openly and spontaneously in collective worship. Parents and staff commented on examples when learners have turned to prayer in their own lives. This included one girl who prayed in a public setting because she felt nervous and knew that God would help her. The links with the local church and community play a strong part in enhancing learners' experiences of worship. All members of the school community speak enthusiastically about the church run lunchtime club, Sandygate Stars. As a result of these links, the school and church are very much viewed as being part of one big family. Learners have some understanding of God as Father and Son but do not yet have an age appropriate understanding of God the Holy Spirit. Learners have started to be involved in the evaluation of collective worship but are not yet fully involved in leading and planning daily acts of worship. The system for pupil monitoring of collective worship is being developed but the impact of the results of this monitoring is not yet visible. Since the previous inspection the foundation governors have made some progress in developing their roles in formally monitoring collective worship, however the feedback from this does not yet clearly identify where improvements enhance provision. This is why collective worship is not yet

outstanding.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The effectiveness of RE is good because by the time the learners leave the school at the end of Key Stage 1 they have made good progress and attain levels that are at least in line with national expectations. This is because teaching is good with teachers' having a secure subject knowledge. Planning for lessons is detailed with the needs of all learners clearly identified. There is an appropriate balance of learning about religion and learning from religion and this helps learners to link their understanding to the core Christian values of the school. Learners understand the marking procedures and are able to explain how this helps them to know how well they are doing. As a consequence, they are also able to use this system to reflect on what they have learnt and then apply it to their own lives. Learners know that parables are stories that Jesus told. One child said 'parables have lessons in that we can follow'. They talk enthusiastically about other religions and what other people believe. Another child said 'we need to know what other people believe so we can be friends'. Parents also value the impact that the RE teaching has and they recognise the importance of learning about other faiths and visiting different places of worship. One parent commented that they were impressed that their child knew what a menorah was. RE is not yet outstanding because the curriculum is not rich and varied enough. It does not provide sufficient opportunities for creativity and originality and does not enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding through a wide range of learning opportunities. Monitoring of RE is an area for school development that has correctly been identified by the subject leader and by the governors. They recognise that if the monitoring were more robust, it would lead to improvements in teaching and learning in Religious Education.

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

The headteacher of the school promotes a clear Christian vision. The process of developing the Christian values was well led and managed by the headteacher and governors. This means that all members of the school community have played an integral role in developing and establishing the values of the school. The distinctively Christian character of the school impacts on standards of achievement, behaviour and the well-being of the whole school community. The partnership between the school, the church and parents is established, embedded and contributes fully to the life of the school. This means that there is a strong sense of inclusivity, acceptance and compassion both within the school and the wider community. The vicar and children's discipleship leader are regular visitors to the school and this has helped to maintain the strong links between the church and school. The governors are developing their processes of monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Christian distinctiveness but systems are not yet sufficiently rigorous enough to show analysis of impact and identification of further improvements. This is why the school is not yet outstanding. The headteacher and governors recognise the need for professional development opportunities and as such, are benefitting from opportunities provided by the Diocese. The school meets statutory requirements for RE and collective worship. Parents feel sufficiently consulted and welcomed into the life of the school and, as a result, have a high opinion of this compassionate, inclusive Christian school.

SIAMS report May 2016 Marlow CE VA Infant School