



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Polehampton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Hermitage Drive
Twyford
Berkshire
RG10 9HS

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Wokingham

Dates of inspection: 17 March 2016

Date of last inspection: 17 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 109981

Headteacher: Helen Ball

Inspector's name and number: Jenny Earp 288

School context

Polehampton School is an oversubscribed two-form entry infant school with 180 pupils, serving the local area of Wokingham. The majority of pupils are from a white British heritage and favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Since the last SIAMS inspection, the school has been restructured and is now part of the Polehampton CE Schools federation, which includes the junior school. The two schools work together in an effective, mutually-supportive partnership. Pupils make good progress and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Polehampton CE Infant School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Christian values have an evident impact on the school's approach to the pupils' wellbeing and attitudes towards learning
- The Christian character of the school promotes positive relationships between all members of the school community
- The dynamic, Christian leadership of the headteacher and her vision for the school is shared by all stakeholders
- The strong partnership of the school and church is a beacon of faith, hope and love in the local community

Areas to improve

- Review assessment procedures in religious education in the light of the latest national and diocesan changes, to ensure pupils continue to make good progress in the subject
- Promote an awareness of the trinity to ensure pupils begin to have an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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

Polehampton Infant School provides a very positive learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve well. The Christian character of the school has a significant impact on the academic standards, personal development and wellbeing of all pupils, who make good progress across the year groups. Parents value the kindness shown by staff and say that 'every child's individual needs are met, whatever they are'. For instance, a parent of a disabled child was particularly grateful to the school for the compassionate way her child was supported when settling in at the school. The school is very nurturing and this can be seen in 'The Sunshine Room', where pupils receive valuable, pastoral care. An effective 'Super Learner Profile' has been implemented successfully at the school. This child-friendly initiative ensures that children have a clear understanding of how their behaviour and attitudes impact directly on their learning. As a result, pupils have a high level of self-esteem, confidence and motivation. The Christian character supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners well through the rich, broad curriculum. This includes inviting visitors from other faiths, celebrating festivals and the outstanding music provision. This was seen when the children sang the school song, 'We work and play from day to day at Polehampton Infants' with great enthusiasm on the day of the inspection. A special founder's event held every year on Polehampton Day is effective in teaching children the importance of local history and Christian tradition. Relationships at the school are excellent because the staff consistently model Christian values. The senior management team, in particular, demonstrate their commitment and dedication, going the extra mile to support other colleagues, living out Christian values every day. This, in turn, benefits pupils who follow their example and gain confidence serving others through simple actions or by supporting charities, such as Sports Relief and Great Ormond Street hospital. The Christian character promotes an understanding of and respect for diverse communities. This was evident when a Jewish parent praised the school for being inclusive and caring, confirming that she and her family were warmly welcomed as members of the school community. Religious education (RE) contributes significantly to the Christian character of the school and standards are high in the subject. The RE curriculum is rich and varied, using the Pan-Berkshire agreed syllabus and Discovery RE resource effectively. Assessment of RE is currently being updated, in line with recent assessment guidelines for core subjects. Pupils enjoy religious education and are excited and challenged by RE, as seen in a Year 1 lesson on the day of the inspection. With great enjoyment, all the children undertook a freeze-frame activity about Jesus' journey into Jerusalem. The school's emphasis on giving praise and recognition for individuals can be seen all around the school, but particularly through the Margaret Wall Award, given to children who demonstrate a specific Christian value being promoted at that time. Pupils value this award and speak of it eagerly, explaining that one child received the award for showing courage and resilience during an illness.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Acts of worship are special times in the school day and impact positively on both pupils and adults within the school community. Worship makes a powerful contribution to defining pupils' attitudes through its Christian and Biblical context. Children engage with collective worship well, with even the youngest children understanding its importance. This is because worship is well planned and matched to the needs of the young learners, providing many opportunities for them to participate actively and grow in their spiritual understanding. This was illustrated very well by two high quality acts of worship observed during the inspection. The foundation stage's spring festival drew on the excitement of new life, in which all pupils took an active part with obvious enjoyment. The singing of 'Life is a wonderful thing' was both lively and animated. New chicks were hatching out at school at the time and this further extended the awe and wonder of the event for all the children. Parents recognise the value of worship in school and enjoy attending assemblies to which they are often invited. Older pupils listened carefully to a Bible story, were given time to think and sang exceptionally well. Worship is distinctively Christian, with a clear focus on the

values of the school. A variety of presenters, including the headteacher, teaching staff and the local clergy take the lead. Having the local church team attend regularly means that children are familiar with them and confident in their presence. Themes for collective worship focus on Christian values and the seasons of the church's year. Each class presents worship once a term, allowing all pupils the opportunity to plan and lead worship. Celebrations of the major Christian festivals take place in St. Mary's Church, where the infants join pupils from the junior school to worship together. The youngest infant child and the oldest junior child always light a candle in the Leavers' service to mark the transition between schools. This enhances the pupils' experience of worship further. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the purpose of prayer and there are many occasions for the children to pray throughout the school day. An annual prayer journey in June allows Year 2 pupils to reflect on their lives so far and to look ahead to changing times with reassurance and confidence. Times of stillness and silence during worship allow children to reflect and explore their own spirituality. All children know the school prayer and are proud to say 'Help us to be fair and kind and always keep you in our mind'. The simple language of the school prayer makes it very accessible to all the young pupils. The school makes excellent use of its resources, including many artefacts and inspiring art displays, such as the Christian values displays in both the hall and entrance corridor. Christian festivals are celebrated in imaginative ways, with many visual prompts to aid pupils' understanding. Pupils are not yet able to articulate an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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

'The school is 'an inclusive and caring Christian community where everyone is encouraged to aim high every day' reads the school's mission statement and this is certainly lived out in the life of Polehampton Infant School. Governors and leaders at the school articulate an explicit Christian vision and are deeply committed to raising standards and expectations at the school. For instance, everyone involved at the school, understands how Biblical teaching shapes the approach to teaching and pastoral care. Under the inspiring leadership of the headteacher, staff are motivated and empowered at every level to identify with and achieve the high ideals of this church school. Christian values are embedded into its life and work and explicitly expressed and practised by all members of the school community. Links with the local church and community are integral and the local vicar remarked that 'the links are such a part of school life, it is normality'. Parents say they particularly value the contribution to school life made by Revd Simon and the children hold him in great esteem. There are high levels of engagement with the parents, strong support from the PTA and excellent pupil attendance. Feedback gathered from all groups in the school community is regular and informative. This ensures that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and informs the governors' priorities in development planning. The change to federation status has been extremely well managed and has enabled governors to steer a firm course through a rapidly changing education landscape. The popular headteacher provides a strong, Christian example, leading staff, governors and parents with great dedication. One parent said, 'She is amazing, just amazing' and this sentiment was echoed by many parents on the day of the inspection. Leaders prepare for future leadership across church schools by facilitating quality training, networking with other schools and encouraging staff to take a leading role in planning and delivering acts of worship. The federation of two church schools provides further scope for staff to take on and extend their leadership roles. This could be seen on the day of the inspection in the way key members of staff were able to articulate the school's Christian distinctiveness with confidence. The highly effective leadership of religious education by the experienced RE coordinator, supports the school's Christian character very well and has meant that RE makes a major contribution to the Christian distinctiveness of the school, as well as the spiritual development of its pupils. The arrangements for religious education and collective worship exceed statutory requirements and the areas for development in the previous inspection have all been addressed effectively.