

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

## **Theale Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School**

Church Street  
Theale  
Reading  
RG7 5BZ

### **Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: West Berkshire  
Date of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
Date of last inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> January 2008  
School's unique reference number: 8693045  
Headteacher: Mrs Catherine Morley  
Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lesley Turville 732

### **School context**

Theale is an average sized primary school which serves this large village community on the outskirts of Reading. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium are below the national average. There is a specially resourced provision for up to 11 pupils on site which caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Theale as a Church of England school are outstanding**

The clear vision and strong leadership of the headteacher ensure that the explicit Christian character of this school which is based on carefully selected and clearly articulated Christian values and principles is, as one parent says, 'the pulse' of the whole community.

### **Established strengths**

- Explicit Christian values, linked to biblical teaching that underpin the school community and are lived out daily by all its members
- Highly committed and active governors who effectively support and challenge
- An emphasis on social, moral, spiritual and cultural education delivered through excellent teaching that ensures all children are valued and have their needs met.
- Excellent use of the school environment to support its Christian character

### **Focus for development**

- To extend pupils experiences of worship by developing opportunities for them to plan and develop outdoor reflective spaces which allow them to lead worship in the environment

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

'In this school the Christian vision is not just words on the wall but something that is lived out daily'; this statement, made by a member of staff, is repeatedly articulated by all members of the school community. This results in excellent relationships between pupils and staff, because adults provide exemplary role models for pupils to follow within a context of love and mutual respect. Pupils are clear that they are loved and valued and have a voice within the school which in turn makes them keen to support others in local and global communities who are less fortunate than themselves. Parents express trust and delight in the school's ability to meet the needs of all their children and one parent of a child with special needs states that this is the 'first place to give us some hope' which she attributes to the inclusive nurturing ethos of the school. Another mother says that she 'doesn't think there is a child in the class that doesn't get some form of individual treatment'. All school policies are set within the context of aspirational and biblical quotes which ensure that teachers plan opportunities for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the children across the curriculum with staff taking every chance to widen pupils' horizons and broaden their first hand learning experiences. Pupils enjoy being challenged and know that they are supported by adults, as well as each other, to achieve academically and personally. This was recognised in the school's recent outstanding Ofsted report and was evidenced in an outstanding RE lesson where children were invited to respond to the Easter story through carefully designed activities that led the pupils to explore themes of 'struggle, suffering, repentance and hope' deepening their personal understanding and engagement with the story. Pupils also speak with enthusiasm about the outdoor learning programme which contributes to the outstanding

achievement across the school. Pupils are proud of the physical environment which is carefully used to reinforce the school's Christian ethos for example music and displays are skilfully used in the main foyer to provide an inspiring entrance to the school celebrating the achievements of the pupils and setting these within the context of the school's vision and values.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Collective worship occupies an important place in the daily life of the school and is a key element of Christian witness using Jesus as an example to follow and the Bible as a means to explore Christian values. Music and story are used as an important part of worship; pupils listen attentively to classical music upon entry and show a good knowledge about what they have heard when questioned. The school choir supported the observed worship by singing an inspiring version of the Lord's prayer. A carefully planned programme provides pupils with a range of experiences each week and a chance for all adults including parents and clergy to contribute to planning and leading. On most days the whole school comes together which fosters a sense of community and at other times pupils worship in the classroom using national current affairs as a focus. The impact of this on pupils was seen when a child spoke sensitively about an issue they had discussed the previous week in this session. Pupils recognise symbols used in worship and can explain their meaning. Parents value opportunities to share worship in the school and in the church and the strong relationship with the local incumbent has led to a group of school parents starting a 'family church' service. Pupils value opportunities to worship in the church at special times of the year. The hall space is recognisably a place of worship, defined by its decoration; a frieze showing a chronology of the bible runs around the perimeter and a large image of the last supper painted on the wall dominates the space. A prayer tree and a prayer box provide opportunities for personal prayer and these are sometimes shared in worship. Pupils value further opportunities for reflection which are provided through the quiet space which they can use when they need to withdraw and interactive spaces in each classroom. Staff and pupils say that this has helped when difficult situations have arisen in classes providing a focus for discussions and prayer. Evaluation by staff, pupils and governors informs changes to patterns of worship with children recently expressing a desire to be more actively involved in leading and the headteacher is keen to develop this as an aspect of their outdoor learning experience using God's creation as a background.

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

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, communicating her vision effectively and inspiring loyalty across the whole community. The very professional and dedicated staff, evidenced by the highly effective leadership of RE and the teaching observed, contribute to the success of the school. Senior leaders and governors speak passionately about the school and the effect of the ethos on all members of the community and are aware of the need to ensure that this is sustained and nurtured. Staff talk warmly about their own personal spiritual and professional journeys since working in the school showing that they feel valued and supported. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a prominent part of the school development plan. The chair of governors and the incumbent meet regularly with the headteacher to monitor progress against this plan and questions about the ethos of the school are included in parental questionnaires. However governors recognise that they could be more actively involved in writing and updating the school self-evaluation documentation. Parents are very supportive of the school and although they don't always choose the school because of its church status they value the impact this has on their children. One parent claims that she experiences this every day when she picks her child up and she is so happy, she claims that 'money can't buy that' and another mother recounts how she has never seen a child who is not 'skipping' to school. The prospectus and staff handbook set out clearly what is expected of all staff and performance management is carefully managed to reflect the schools values. The school's strong links and productive relationship with the local church are demonstrated in a number of ways that enrich the school life. The incumbent is a frequent visitor to the school and runs a Latin club as well as supporting the community practically and pastorally. The school supports the community through fund raising activities and numerous community events which last year included a nativity staged in the local pub.

SIAS report March 2013 Theale C of E Primary, Church Street, Theale, Reading RG7 5BZ