

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### Great Milton Church of England Primary School

The Green Great Milton Oxfordshire OX44 7NT	
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Oxford</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Good
Local authority	Oxford
Date of inspection	23 June 2017
Date of last inspection	1 December 2011
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary Controlled 123130
Headteacher	Alyson Frost
Inspector's name and number	Robin Sharples 398

#### School context

Great Milton is a rural primary school of 150 pupils set in very extensive grounds. The school has a lower than average number of pupils with special educational needs and children eligible for pupil premium. The majority of pupils are of White British origin and deprivation indicators for the school are below average. Half of the pupils are from within the Great Milton catchment area with the other children coming from rural and urban areas. There has been some significant change of staff and governors. Four long standing members of staff left the school at Easter. The Deputy Headteacher joined the school after Easter.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great Milton as a Church of England school are good

- The Headteacher's vision and sense of direction has led directly to the consolidation of the school's Christian distinctiveness and the introduction of several initiatives which are developing this even further.
- The strong team created by members of staff powerfully reinforces the sense of purpose and vision built up by the school leadership and demonstrates the Christian values consistently within the school community.
- The children readily respond to the vision and values and model these amongst themselves which has led to rapid development of the school's Christian character.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop the school's definition of spirituality, including the use of appropriate training so that the range of experiences offered to children can be extended both in worship and across the curriculum.
- Work with diocesan support to increase the opportunities for learner led worship within the pattern being established in school so that children can develop greater responsibility for worship.
- Introduce the diocesan scheme of work for religious education (RE) and seek appropriate advice to both enhance teacher knowledge and to ensure smooth incorporation of the material into existing provision.

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

Everyone at Great Milton has worked hard to ensure that the Christian ethos is integral to the life of the school. Governors and members of staff model the school's values and teachers speak of love being 'at the heart of all we do'. This modelling is recognised by parents and the ethos is referred to as a family atmosphere 'with an added dimension'. The values are firmly anchored in Christian teaching and children readily link them with Bible stories such as 'Zacchaeus', 'Jonah' and 'The Good Samaritan'. The school has been working with all the values from 'Values for Life', the children picked out justice, respect and trust as particularly important to them in their relationships and responsibilities.

Children appreciate all that the school offers as the context for their learning and make good progress overall. Careful monitoring ensures that the needs of all learners are addressed effectively. Attendance is good with parents and children all saying that they enjoy the school and everything that it offers.

Children readily discuss moral and social ideas. They relate these ideas to the school's values and understand that the values affect the way that people behave and the choices that they make. The school council has a significant place in school, organising charity activities and canvassing opinions from the classes. The impact of children's understanding of values is seen in their attitudes to learning in classrooms and their behaviour. Friendship forms an important part of children's discussion. They are able to talk about features of friendship and the way that they relate to each other in work and play. There are a number of opportunities for spiritual exploration and experience such as outdoor work and reflective areas in all classes but these are not yet structured around a strong definition of spirituality within the school.

RE is a very important part of the curriculum. Children are enthusiastic about the subject, it serves to develop their thinking about faith and has strong links with spiritual development. The children's work and discussion shows the impact of good teaching. However, the school has recognised some areas which need further work such as increased subject knowledge. RE provides a good basis for understanding faiths other than Christianity and other world cultures. This basis has been improved by inviting visitors from other faiths notably Hinduism and Judaism to talk to the children and share their beliefs. Children are enthusiastic about learning about other faiths and can discuss why it is important to learn about and understand the beliefs of others. The headteacher is to introduce the Diocesan RE Scheme in the coming year as part of the school development plan to enrich the local agreed syllabus.

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

Worship has a high profile in school. Worship includes a range of attributes such as story, song and a focus table. Prayer is a powerful component in school; individual prayers are found in classrooms, opportunities for prayer occur through the day and the school has adopted a well-known prayer as its school prayer. The children speak of prayer as valuable, a way of speaking with God and as an opportunity for spiritual engagement and reflection. While this is good impact on spiritual experience, the school is in the early stages of developing a well-established and embedded understanding of spirituality across all aspects of school life.

At present worship is mostly adult led which includes the local incumbent. There is a variety of presentation, which is being gradually extended as children take on more responsibility. A pupil worship team has been established which currently deals with technical and other support for worship leaders and gathers review comments from pupils. Children are keen to take on more leading roles and while they are beginning to assume a more prominent part in worship they are not yet taking responsibility for the creation or leadership of liturgical patterns. Children and parents speak with great affection about worship that takes place at the local church such as the leavers' service. The celebration assemblies are very much enjoyed by the community.

Children's theological understanding is developed through worship. The children have a good grasp of Jesus' place in Christianity through gospel stories and other such material including hymns and prayers. The Trinity is being increasingly woven into worship, the school is currently using an inventive approach using Celtic prayer to build up Trinitarian understanding. This is being effective in helping children understand the relational dimension of the Holy Trinity as opposed to a static three-part picture.

Worship is monitored carefully by staff, children and governors. Adults working in school commented that they appreciated the opportunity that worship gave for their own reflections and prayers and this sentiment was also acknowledged by the parents. The pattern of worship, both across the year and in each week, is being developed at present - this is to take account of pupil views, enable pupils to plan and lead regularly and to incorporate seasonal emphases from the church year.

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

The school leaders have a strong vision to cultivate respect for the spiritual and moral beliefs of the Christian tradition while showing tolerance and understanding of all religions. Care is taken to root this in the Christian narrative. Governors have been working hard to ensure that standards of learning have been improved. There is careful and regular monitoring and challenge to the school. The headteacher and deputy demonstrate a good understanding of the priorities of the school indicated by attainment and progress data and have created a school development plan which recognises these priorities and takes full account of the areas noted on the school Inspection Dashboard. The distinctive Christian character of the school is being woven into all aspects of school development. The 'Values for Life' resource has been used effectively to develop good understanding of values as distinctively Christian. This has resulted in a large number of values being used in school which can be a little confusing for the children at times. This has been noted and governors and leaders are conducting a programme to bring a stronger focus to the school ethos by identifying a set of core values. The process is including all stakeholders, staff pupils and parents.

Staff are given opportunities for professional development which are directly linked to the needs of the children and the school development plan such as the introduction of Forest Schools. All members of staff commented on the strong team that has been established and the mutual support it offers. The newer staff members commented on how the excellent relationships within school have made their induction smooth and effective. Good use is made of diocesan support and of training opportunities provided by the diocese for both teachers and governors. The school leaders have taken full account of the areas for development from the last inspection and both RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements.

The local vicar has an important place in the school he takes weekly worship and ensures that he is available in the school during break time. This provides a strong pastoral connection between school and church. His place in school is also very much appreciated by parents. Parents are very confident in the school, they say that their children learn well and are safe. The easy access to members of staff and the headteacher means that any matters of concern are dealt with quickly and efficiently which has led to greater parental confidence in the school.