

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Basildon CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

School Lane
Upper Basildon
West Berkshire
RG8 8PD

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: West Berkshire
Dates of inspection: 25th June 2013
Date of last inspection: 25th June 2008
School's unique reference number: 109949
Headteacher: Paul Field
Inspector's name and number: Jenny Earp, 288

School context

This small primary school is situated in an attractive rural setting, close to Reading. The school building is an amalgam of the original Victorian school and a spacious, modern extension. Pupil numbers have increased in recent years and there are currently 133 pupils on roll. The local church, St. Stephens, is within walking distance of the school. The headteacher has been in post for four years and a new deputy head has been appointed for September 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Basildon Primary as a Church of England school are good

Basildon is a good school, where pupils thrive in a nurturing, loving environment. Christian values are clearly demonstrated in caring relationships, with a strong commitment to the personal and spiritual development of every child. The school's expressed vision of 'Loving, Living and Learning', permeates the daily life and achievements of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive, providing a good basis for continued improvement.

Established strengths

- The leadership, vision and commitment of the headteacher and governors in the development of the distinctive Christian character of the school
- Well-behaved, confident learners, who are aware of the values of respect and tolerance of others
- Strong links with the parish church and excellent support for the school from the vicar and Christian community

Focus for development

- Enhance pupils' experience and participation in collective worship, by enabling them to play a stronger role in its planning and leadership
- Develop strategies to increase learners' understanding of other faiths and cultures by increasing the global dimension in the school's curriculum
- Facilitate opportunities for older pupils, in particular, to visit diverse places of worship

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

Basildon is a welcoming and friendly community, where all feel valued and special. The Christian character contributes well to the academic achievement and personal development of all learners. Standards of attainment for the large majority of pupils are at least in line with national expectations and often higher. For instance, the school's data analysis shows that all pupils at Key Stage 2 have made at least two levels of progress in reading, writing and maths this year. Christian values are at the heart of the school's aims and underpin the life of the school, resulting in a high level of care and consideration for others. Pupils are proud of the school and say they have good teachers, 'who are always kind' and listen if they have concerns or problems. Good structures exist in the school to promote the spiritual development of pupils, such as the

'Bubble Time' initiative, the 'thought boxes' and excellent reflection areas in each of the classrooms. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school because relationships are positive at every level, with older children helping each other and acting as good role models for the younger pupils. The school is very inclusive of all its pupils, ensuring those with additional needs are fully integrated into the life and work of the school. Parents speak highly of the friendliness of the school and say it is a very caring environment in which their children can develop and grow. Pupils are enthusiastic about fund-raising and donating to charities, such as the Air Ambulance Service, through which they express the Christian value of service, developing empathy with those less fortunate than themselves. The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of visitors and pupils have good opportunities for extra-curricular activities. However, awareness of other cultures and faiths is underdeveloped and pupils have had few opportunities to visit diverse places of worship in recent years. The environment is used to demonstrate the distinctive Christian character effectively. For instance, both the striking display illustrating the school motto, 'loving, living and learning' and the church year clock, located in the hall, proclaim the school's Christian foundation. Salvadorian crosses, displayed in every classroom, were blessed by the bishop on a recent visit to the school. The experienced religious education coordinator uses her expertise effectively to support staff and this has had a very positive effect on the teaching and learning of religious education at the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship holds a central place in the life of the school and has a good impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development. It has a strong Christian focus and major Christian festivals are celebrated, both in school and in church. Planning provides a structure that enables learners to encounter Christian beliefs through a wide range of inclusive and inspirational themes. Biblical material is often used and learners are able to make links between this and their own lives. A good example of this was when pupils read the passage from Ecclesiastes 3; 'There is a time for everything' and reflected on its meaning, thoughtfully and honestly. The worship leader has begun monitoring the impact of worship and pupils' views are sought. The 'transformation box', kept by the prayer board, encourages children to record and share how their thoughts, words and actions have been influenced by worship. Some very succinct, reflective comments have been written, such as one by a Year 2 child who said, 'The assembly about loving your enemies changed me because now I play with people I don't normally play with'. Pupils say that worship makes them think about Jesus and are aware of His important place in worship. They understand the purpose of prayer in their own lives and are able to say the Lord's Prayer, as well as contributing their own prayers to both school and church worship. However, pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in planning or leading worship. The use of St. Stephen's church for special Christian festival services develops pupils' understanding of the Anglican faith. Parents value the links with the local church and remark that attendance is high at both school assemblies and church services. There is good weekly involvement from the local vicar and the church team, through leading worship, as well as running the 'Puzzled' and 'Jigsaw' lunchtime Christian clubs.

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

The headteacher, as a spiritual and academic leader, provides a strong Christian example, leading staff and pupils with enthusiasm and resolve. Foundation governors say that Christian values are 'part of the warp and weft' of the school and are able to articulate clearly how these values impact positively on the learners and the life of the school. The Spiritual Development Group has been effective in considering ways to improve acts of worship, within the broader context of spirituality. As a result of the governors' highly reflective self-evaluation strategies, achievement and distinctiveness have been consolidated and leaders have a good understanding of the school's performance. The school's strong Christian foundation is explicit in the mission statement, prospectus and in public documents on the website. The leadership of worship and religious education is given a high priority and this ensures good practice in both areas, with stakeholders benefitting from quality professional development. The Parochial Church Council generously supports the school financially every year, as well as presenting all Year 6 pupils with a Bible at the end of term's leavers' service. Parents express confidence in the school and its management, appreciating the friendly, family atmosphere and open door policy. They say their children make clear links between their personal experiences and Christian faith because of the prominent role taken by the vicar, both in their school and in their community. One parent commented, 'I know when my child has had RE that day; they come home and ask so many questions'. The school has successfully addressed all the issues raised at the last inspection and has improved in relation to all key inspection elements.