

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Curzon Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School

Penn Street Village
Amersham
Buckinghamshire
HP7 0QL

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Buckinghamshire

Date of inspection: 19 June 2013

Date of last inspection: 11 June 2008

School's unique reference number: 110429

Headteacher: Mrs Jacquie Coles B Ed [Hons]

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Curzon is a small, rural primary school serving Penn Street and the surrounding area near Amersham. Currently there are 140 pupils on roll, who are mainly from a White British background. Pupils mainly come from non-religious backgrounds, Christian families or other faiths. The headteacher has been in post for seven years. The parish church of Holy Trinity is within walking distance of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Curzon as a Church of England school are outstanding

At the heart of Curzon School is its vision; 'Learning, sharing and growing under God'. This school's ethos is built upon the threefold foundation of spiritual distinctiveness, collaborative community, fulfilling potential and developing giftings, which is underpinned by Biblical teaching. Curzon pupils thrive and achieve highly. Currently, the school is top of the Buckinghamshire League Tables for progress made by its pupils.

Established strengths

- The strong sense of family and Christian community, embraced by everyone.
- The excellent experiences offered to pupils in collective worship and religious education [RE], nurturing their spiritual development.
- The positive attitude of the pupils who enjoy their learning and are encouraged to achieve their best.

Focus for development

- Enhance the evaluation of collective worship, enabling pupils, governors and staff to interact together.
- Establish a forum for pupils and adults to engage with the deep questions of life and faith.

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

Curzon sustains an excellent learning environment where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. Data shows that all pupils are making good to outstanding progress, with an increasing number achieving higher than the local and national average as pupils move up through the school. Systematic half termly tracking of pupil progress by senior leaders ensures all pupils are effectively challenged and good and outstanding learning outcomes are maintained. Parents speak of the way 'pupils are cared for and challenged within achievable goals'. Parents value that 'all the children's names are known to all the teachers' as well as 'the way individual needs are met are astonishing' as their children are 'taught to trust God and how to live their lives'. Every effort is made to support pupils here where attendance is good and honoured in achievement assemblies. Exclusions are rare in this highly inclusive school which offers fresh starts. Every day of education and every lesson counts. These pupils are inspired to succeed by the example of many visitors, which have included Olympian Ed McKeever. Within this cohesive family, there is a very strong sense of what it means to be living in a Christian community in which church and school links are important. Parents speak highly of the school's association with Holy Trinity Church, saying 'one of the biggest gifts the church gives is community'. Here is a place where exemplary relationships are nurtured and everyone values the Courtesy, Consideration, Cooperation, Confidence, Competence and Respect [5 C's and an R] which underpin all school life. Pupils say, 'Jesus told us how to be kind in the Bible so we follow the Five C's and R and try to be kind so we can be more like Jesus'. Pupils experience the Christian values of service and gratitude through singing to senior citizens and fundraising activities. Such events enable pupils to gain an understanding of their place in the community and their responsibility to others. Pupils' appreciation of religious diversity and global awareness is developing through links with Cranford Park School as well as Kirongo Rainbow School in Africa,

showing how the school has progressed since the last inspection. Displays and quiet prayer spaces in the hall and classrooms as well as prayers in the library, enhance pupils' spiritual development. The school grounds, which include The Easter Garden, wildlife area and prayer trees for reflection, all enhance pupils' spirituality and their awareness of God's creation.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The attitude of pupils to collective worship is excellent because the quality of worship offered to them involves them and greatly enhances their spiritual development. Creative worship with a focus on Jesus' teaching in The Bible begins every school day. Pupils explain the significance of lighting the candles to commence worship as 'one to represent God the Father, one to represent God the Son and one more to represent The Holy Spirit and a heart shaped one in the middle to represent Curzon'. They clearly articulate that 'God is protecting us and we are in the middle of The Trinity and protected by other parts of the body'. Pupils identify with Bible verses used in worship such as Malachi 4:2 which speaks to them of 'Jesus as the Son of God shining rays of love out to everyone so they can be healed from their sins'. There is great support from local clergy. Pupils especially speak highly of worship led by Holy Trinity's vicar, acknowledging that worship enables them to 'learn about God'. Key Christian festivals, such as Easter, are celebrated in church which pupils value, saying 'the church is created for worshipping God and the school prays as it is a Christian school.' Although pupils contribute to the evaluation of worship through reflection books, pupil surveys and the school council, there is currently no opportunity for pupils to discuss evaluation with governors directly. They enjoy worship outdoors and welcome more involvement in drama and music as well as ownership of worship for all pupils in an environment where pupils plan and lead worship. A highlight for pupils, parents and governors was the pupils' re-enactment of the events of Holy Week. Governors and staff welcome interacting with Pupil Voice to improve the quality of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE has a high profile in this school and is enthusiastically led by the RE coordinator. Teaching and learning is very good and often outstanding. Curzon already has a gifted and talented register for pupils in RE. Standards in RE are as high as other core subjects, with some pupils demonstrating very high levels of achievement and attaining Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is always good throughout the school. There is a systematic method of assessment in place which informs planning and ensures consistency in assessment procedures, using pupil speak 'I can' levels. Marking is purposeful with pupils recognising what they need to do in order to improve their work, through interactive reflective questions from teachers so they 'can think how we did'. Staff praise the RE subject leader who 'meets with each teacher each term, helping with resources to inspire and enthuse pupils'. Pupils' knowledge of Christianity is very good. Parents, pupils and external visitors from different faith traditions such as Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam enhance pupils' learning with many pupils showing a good level of theological literacy, acknowledging Christianity, Islam and Judaism all have 'one supreme God'. They can explain Christian concepts such as salvation as 'God loves you and wants you to know him so he can fill you with peace and give you real life'. Lessons encourage pupils to reflect, using Godly Play or Philosophy for Children [P4C] enquiry approaches to learning. Year 2 pupils acknowledge that they hear 'God speaking to them' through Bible stories such as Paul and Silas in prison whilst Year 6 pupils engage with how pilgrimage can 'renew your faith'. Next steps, already identified as part of future plans, include enhancing the programme of visits and visitors to support pupils' learning as well as the addition of new units to enhance pupils' knowledge of Christianity in the local area as well as its place as a worldwide faith. The school welcomes establishing a space for pupils to discuss questions about faith with clergy and other adults.

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

Curzon's Christian heritage is effectively promoted by the headteacher, clergy, governors, parents and staff so that the school's Church of England foundation is celebrated. The headteacher's three pillared vision with its emphasis on outcomes for pupils, is embraced by all and has a clear focus for each year so governors can monitor and evaluate progression in a systematic way. This includes a focus on values and how these make a difference to pupils as well as progress in RE for individual pupils. Success criteria include raising standards and the level of achievement each year. Governors appoint effective teachers, providing them with opportunities of leadership and professional development. Foundation governors monitor worship and RE systematically. Currently, RE is reported through the foundation governors' committee which feeds directly into termly governor body meetings. The school has identified areas for development. These include working with parents to develop quiet spaces in the school grounds. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with school and church working closely together. Pupils' work has been displayed in church. An excellent example was the recent Easter stations of the cross. Parents speak highly of the 'teamwork amongst all the staff who are a very positive team, including the office staff'. This welcoming, worshipping and witnessing community lives out its mission in the community it serves.

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