



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Walsh Church of England Junior School

Ash St, Ash, Aldershot GU12 6LT

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Guildford

Local authority: Surrey

Dates of inspection: 7 July 2016

Date of last inspection: 1 July 2011

School's unique reference number: 125156

Headteacher: Sue Roper

Inspector's name and number: Marcia Headon 761

School context

Walsh Junior, with 300 pupils on roll, is a larger than average junior school. The school has a Learning Support Centre for 16 children with learning and additional needs. The school serves the local community of Ash and Tongham. The majority of children are from white British families and the proportion who come from minority ethnic heritages or speak English as a second language is well below the national average. The percentage of children with special educational needs and disabilities is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils who receive additional government funding is average. The school is part of the West Surrey Foundation, a federation of seven local schools which work closely together.

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

- The well-established Christian values have a highly positive impact on the relationships within the school.
- Governors have shown unswerving commitment in ensuring the Christian distinctiveness of the school.
- The careful support and care which the school offers to pupils makes a huge contribution to their personal and social development and impacts on their learning.

Areas to improve

- Ensure pupils readily identify the links between the school's Christian values and Biblical texts so that they can fully appreciate the origins of the Christian faith.
- Review with pupils the purpose of collective worship so they are clear that its main intent is 'worship'.
- Widen the range of leaders who deliver collective worship to enable pupils to experience different forms of religious expression.

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

A strong core set of Christian values, which pupils know and which staff and pupils were involved in selecting, is fundamental to the work of the school. They consider the values important and say 'they link to what we do in everyday life'. For example, pupils show the value of responsibility by acting as playground pals, as buddies to younger pupils and they show friendship and kindness in their relationships and respect to one another and to adults. The values are reviewed annually. Despite this, pupils are not always sufficiently explicit in making the connections between the values and Biblical texts. Overall the school meets the academic needs of pupils well. Attainment in 2015 was not as high as in 2014 but this was due to a high number who had learning difficulties in this year group. Pupils are very well provided for as individuals as the school lives out its beliefs that each child is unique to God. Because of the very effective support given to the pupils in the Learning Centre, they make very good progress. The school is highly inclusive and the commitment to 'valuing ourselves and others' is truly embedded. A sense of belonging and working together pervades everything. Relationships within the school are excellent and there is a very good sense of community. Behaviour is good and the wording of the values gives staff the tools and language to help pupils when they do not act appropriately. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is planned for very carefully, not only in collective worship but through the whole curriculum. Pupils show spiritual development appropriate for their age and this was recently enhanced by a 'Prayer Spaces' event where pupils reflected upon displays and artefacts and asked, and in many cases answered, questions of faith. Spiritual development is also deepened by displays of art around the school and religious symbols. A recent initiative in which children considered someone they would wish to sit next to on a park bench and then pose them questions of faith, fired their imagination and elicited responses of considerable depth. In classrooms, reflective spaces are not always well used by pupils or their real purpose fully understood. Pupils show a very good awareness of other cultures and express tolerance to those of other faiths and none. One wrote 'everyone is welcome at this school; however, it does not matter what religion you are – my best friend is a Muslim'. Pupils show compassion to those less fortunate, for example fundraising enough money to buy an iPad for a pupil who was hospitalised for a long time. They also help the elderly, those who are homeless and give generously to the foodbank at harvest festival. Religious Education (RE) is well planned and taught and pupils enjoy these lessons. It teaches pupils about different faiths as well as Christianity and through big questions which are asked, it helps to deepen pupils' understanding of the nature of faith. It is well led and meets the statutory requirements.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils see collective worship (or assembly as it is called) as a time where they meet together to fulfil the school motto of 'to learn, care and succeed together', to listen to stories with a moral message and to sing songs. However, they do not identify with its prime purpose as being to worship together. Collective worship is based on the Christian calendar and the values of the school, but also includes festivals from other religions. In planning, the headteacher is well supported by the Rector who leads worship regularly, as does a member of the clergy team from another parish. Collective worship is usually very interactive with the use of video clips, pictures, pupils answering questions or reading and this increases its impact, which is significant. Pupils recalled an assembly where the headteacher had bound the hands of another teacher so she could not open them and then spoke of this showing them how dreadful it would be to live in a closed world where truth was not the norm. The pupils related this to the importance of always telling the truth whatever the circumstance. Classes are involved in planning and leading collective worship and these are well attended by parents of the pupils in the class group. A good atmosphere is created by the use of a candle as a focal point and links with the Diocese are emphasised by the candle being the one given to Year 6 leavers at the Cathedral service they attended. Music is important in collective worship and the pupils sing with great enthusiasm. At Christmas, Easter and at special times in the year the school visits St Peter's

church for a service. The pupils value this and enjoy going to the church. Other groups lead worship on occasions but currently there is not a wide variety of people visiting and consequently pupils' understanding of different Anglican traditions is not being developed sufficiently. Most pupils are developing an understanding of the Trinity. Pupils write prayers for assembly, and the school has a prayer tree where they can place their prayers. Although pupils have a growing understanding of the importance of prayer and the part it plays in school and in their own lives, they are less certain what happens to the prayers on the prayer tree. Pupils, staff and governors are involved with evaluating collective worship and this is acted upon. Parents are not yet involved with this. The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship.

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

The school has a very clear vision of its future as a Church of England school. The Christian ethos is very apparent and the headteacher is an excellent role model in demonstrating the values in her everyday work. She wishes to ensure families are involved in the life of the school so that the school's Christian values are central in pupils' lives. Policies in the school and their implementation are firmly underpinned by the Christian values. The school knows its strengths and areas for development well and the future plans for development as a church school are robust and appropriate. The school has worked hard to develop future leaders of church schools. Both the headteacher and members of the senior team have attended a leadership course run by the Diocese and professional development for other staff has been an important priority. The governors are strongly supportive of the work of the school and actively contribute towards the Christian distinctiveness. The Rector, as well as leading collective worship, visits lessons, holds question and answer sessions with pupils, often attends staff meetings and is a great source of help. All governors are linked to a year group and through this they gain a real insight into the work of the school. The governors review the school's Christian distinctiveness in seminars and have recently used a parent focus group to help with this. The governors have addressed the issues from the previous inspection well. Links with the local church have strengthened since the previous inspection. Pupils visit the church as part of the curriculum and church members were very instrumental in organising the Prayer Spaces event in the school. Pupils' work is often on display at the church, as for example during the 2014 commemorations for the start of the First World War. The church regularly prays for the school. The parish magazine contains items about the school and a report on its work was given to the annual parish meeting. Parents are highly supportive of the school, valuing its strong sense of community, the promotion of its values and the fact that their children are treated as individuals. On the wall of the headteacher's office is a banner, which depicts individual pupils and has the word 'belonging' on it. As one parent stated 'that is the word which this school is about - everyone is made to feel special'.

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