



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Pilton Bluecoat Church of England Academy

Abbey Road

Barnstaple

EX31 1JU

Diocese: Exeter

Local authority: Devon

Dates of inspection: 22nd October 2014

Date of last inspection: N/A (academy convertor)

School's unique reference number: 138315

Headteacher: Mr Paul Mulligan

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Linda Rudge, 791

School context

This school converted to academy status in 2012, and it serves a small area in a large coastal town. It has 251 pupils aged 7-11. They are mostly white British, with a small number of pupils of other backgrounds and ethnicities. Most pupils enter the school from a community infant school which has no religious affiliation. The number of children with additional needs is in line with the national average, as are numbers in receipt of free school lunches. The conversion to academy status has led to a period of change during which there has been refurbishment to existing buildings. Negotiations with the Diocesan team and other authorities are also proceeding about the establishment of a multi-academy trust with two community primary schools in the area. These schools are mentioned on the school's signage outside the building.

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

- The highly effective ways in which eight Christian values including humility, forgiveness and compassion have been embedded in teaching and learning, resulting in inclusive relationships across the school community.
- The high profile of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship that contributes effectively to the Christian character of the school, and to the spiritual identity of the school.
- The highly beneficial effect of the emphasis the school places on international links, and on globalising education, resulting in an emphasis on local community relations and on the pupils' positive understanding of themselves and of other people.

Areas to improve

- Ensure an appropriate level of challenge and achievement in RE for some pupils of higher abilities.
- Develop self-evaluation procedures to include all stakeholders in relation to the school's values and distinctiveness.

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

The distinctiveness of the school is highly appropriate to its specific context. The school promotes its chosen values, well-established before its academy status, through its ethos, environment, its curriculum and its publicity. Special events such as 'Values Day' and 'Psalms Day' enable members of the community to understand their own lives in relation to the ethos of the school they belong to in the town. The chosen values have direct effects on the progress of all groups of pupils in helping almost all of them to meet their potential and intervention programmes are in place to address the needs of all pupils. The school's policies on admissions and exclusion are inclusive and based on the values of love and forgiveness. Pupils from all backgrounds and cultures feel safe and happy, secure in the knowledge that their beliefs are respected and valued. Diverse and appropriate ways of exploring spirituality around the school environment (the meeting place in the Yurt, prayer pebbles and cards, and prayer corners in classrooms) enable pupils to understand and use prayer in their daily lives where it is appropriate to their own spirituality and culture. Religious Education makes a distinctive and effective contribution to the character of the school through its curriculum, through the dedication of the subject leader, and through the reinforcement of the school's values in investigative, reflective and well-planned teaching. Other areas of the curriculum such as Science and literacy also explore questions of meaning and purpose, letting pupils ask questions and challenge ideas presented in a respectful and interested way. This ethos of enquiry, reflection, achievement and support permeates every aspect of daily life, from documentation and colourful displays through to classroom practice and behaviour in the playground. The atmosphere around the school is relaxed, purposeful, friendly and calm. The children show outstanding consideration for each other and for adults, and all members of staff are good role models for the pupils in the school. Members of the community of all ages articulate the links between values such as compassion, and their care for each other. Links with the nearby special school also demonstrate Christian values in action, with many pupils volunteering to help others with special needs to make progress and to enjoy school life.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The school's acts of worship are often inspirational for all members of the community, and always inclusive. Most people, adults and children, engage enthusiastically with this area of school life. Worship takes place in colourful but peaceful environments, usually in the hall, and sometimes in classrooms where special areas for prayer have been created. Part of the impact of worship in school is that pupils understand the concepts of prayer and praise very well. Worship always has a strong Christian focus, especially on the person of Jesus Christ, and the key elements of worship have taught pupils about Anglican practice. Major Christian festivals are celebrated, both in school and also in local churches. The local church community also meets in the school for ecumenical worship on occasions, and many children and some parents attend these events. Pupils can relate Bible stories to their own lives and they show a deep understanding of what it means to be Christian even if their own beliefs and practices are different. Even the youngest children who have just transferred to the school can express what these opportunities provide for them as quiet times to think about others, chances to reflect on things that they feel and believe, and moments to talk with God. Planning and monitoring of worship increasingly involves more of school community and records show that there is variety and continuity in the programme through the year. Pupils are taking responsibility for particular aspects of this central part of the school day. Through the leadership of local ministers, the academy provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of different Christian traditions in worship and these opportunities have led to an increased understanding of diversity within Christianity in England and around the world. Worship has also developed a sense of spiritual and moral awareness amongst pupils which means that they often take a lead in raising funds for charities. They also join in community events that illustrate the Christian character of the school and its emphasis on social justice and global issues.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Teaching and learning in RE is successfully modelled and monitored by the subject leader. The subject is also supported through links with Diocesan advisory team and other professional development resources. The majority of teaching and learning in RE is good, and some of it is outstanding. The curriculum has been developed recently to include an enquiry-based approach, and assessment procedures have been successfully developed so that pupils have an increasing awareness of how to make progress in RE. The subject's planning is linked, where appropriate, to the school's 'Big Event' curriculum. Standards of attainment in RE, for the majority of learners, are at least in line with national expectations and are often higher. RE provides opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills including analysis, evaluation and reflection and pupils show these skills through their own questioning in lessons and through their written responses to tasks set. Most pupils show originality and creativity in applying their knowledge and skills in religious education and many are developing the ability to apply this to questions of meaning and purpose. Most pupils enjoy their learning in RE and the teaching stimulates their interest and provides them with a secure knowledge of key aspects of Christianity. The teaching also effectively creates engagement with other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism, and this is linked in with other initiatives in the school's global education programme. The teachers of RE, and their assistants, use interactive whiteboards, role play and story effectively to ensure the subject is engaging and that the teaching helps pupils of different abilities to learn. In a year 3 class exploring the Hindu festival of 'Divali' observed during the inspection, pupils were able to ask questions and find out the answers about how and why the festival is celebrated in England and India. The subject leader has the highest level of subject expertise and the vision to realise ambitious expectations and improvement. Religious education makes a good contribution to the Christian values of the school, and the subject leader also co-ordinates the school's overall self-evaluation of its distinctiveness as a church school. This member of staff is part-time, but leads the staff to develop their confidence and their subject knowledge through involvement in local RE meetings and regional conferences. This area is not yet outstanding overall as pupils' achievement is not consistent across all stages of learning from 7 to 11, especially as the level of challenge for pupils with higher abilities is not yet appropriate to their needs. However, the majority of pupils make good progress given their starting points.

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

Staff and governors are involved in the continuing impact of the school's Christian character, and they all support and implement the school's vision. They are led by a senior team, including the Headteacher, with an outstanding commitment to the ethos of the school. All the staff clearly articulate and live out the values expressed through the school's vision and ethos in their different roles. The arrangements for RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. Leadership in these areas has created some highly effective practice which has been sustained in the new academy setting. Foundation governors and some parents are closely involved in the daily life of the school and they contribute to the school's distinctiveness through support to pupils and staff, and through leading key events with teachers, such as the Values Day. The new Ethos Group is leading the way in self-evaluation and in further initiatives to celebrate the Christian ethos as the school expands its links with two community schools in the next year. In this way the school is taking a pro-active role in Church school leadership. Links with the local parish church are well-established and they emerge from the school's history before it was an academy, and from renewed dialogue. This area is not yet outstanding because elements of the Ethos Group's action plan are still aspirational, including the wider ownership of school's distinctiveness, and especially amongst the parent community.