

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Hart Street  
Jericho  
Oxford OX2 6BN

#### Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: Oxfordshire  
Date of inspection: 13 December 2012  
Date of last inspection: 21 November 2007  
School's unique reference number: 123211  
Headteacher: Fiona Hawkins  
Inspector's name and number: Jane Tuckett 668

#### School context

St Barnabas CE Primary School is a medium-sized school set in an urban location. It currently has 232 pupils from a wide range of social, cultural, religious and non-faith backgrounds who are taught mostly in year group classes, with below average SEN needs and fewer than average free school meals.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Barnabas School as a CE school are good

The commitment and enthusiasm of the head and staff and strong links with the local church, clergy and community combine to create a powerful atmosphere based on strong Christian values in which children develop well in all aspects of spiritual, moral and social life within a stimulating yet nurturing learning environment and make a valuable contribution to the life of the local community.

#### Established strengths

- The strong mission statement and school rules with their explicitly Christian values of love, trust and forgiveness which underpin the life of the school.
- An inclusive, friendly, supportive environment in which children behave well and feel safe and valued and respect and tolerance are lived on a daily basis.
- The school's central position and involvement in the life of Jericho and close links with St Barnabas' church which create a strong triangle at the heart of the community.

#### Focus for development

- Consider the opportunities for further discussion of key Christian values and how best to communicate about them with all stakeholders, including through the prospectus and school website.
- Consider ways to increase the time and space for reflection throughout the school day and to develop pupil ownership of worship through planning and leadership.
- Develop the management of RE, emphasising evaluation of progress and the impact of RE on learners.

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

Pupils are proud of their school which is overtly based on a strong mission statement and its core values of love, trust and forgiveness. Displayed with a colourful cross poster throughout the school and with each of its six strands linked to a Bible reference and colourful art work it infuses the life of the school. A Christian parent said that the school has an 'unashamedly Christian approach', while an agnostic and a Muslim parent both said that they valued the school's Christian morality and spirituality. The school also emphasises respect, tolerance and inclusion and is able to live these out due to the school's cultural and social diversity. Its openness and liberality led one parent with an ambivalent attitude to her own strict religious upbringing to say that the school had helped to dispel many of her anxieties in relation to faith. One child said that because their school is linked with the church they are able to make mistakes and keep trying because they feel accepted. The values and school rules, the first of which is to tell the truth, result in an environment which is inclusive and supportive and prides itself on racial harmony and positive relationships. Pupils enjoy a stimulating curriculum with support for the individual paramount and acts of kindness as well as achievements publicly recognised. Music is an important part of the school's life and worship, and other extra-curricular opportunities enhance the children's learning. The annual trip to Yenworthy is valued as a 'bubble with stardust'. Younger pupils experience awe and wonder through Forest School activities. The school has Healthy School status; children feel safe at school and valued. The school council is important and has various areas of responsibility including charitable giving and sustainable living generating activities such as eco-warriors, recycle squad and playground buddies. Every child who wishes can find a role for responsible activity. Run-Jericho is a PTA organised community event which involves pupils, parents and the community. The eco-fashion show is always very popular and entertaining as is the hectic and

cosmopolitan annual International Evening. The school has Eco-School status. In a busy and lively school environment corners for reflection in some classrooms and the courtyard area provide a place for a moment of quiet and calm. Recently Jigsaw Club has been a popular addition to after-school activities, giving pupils with staff and clergy the opportunity to explore Christianity through stories, games and crafts.

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

Since the last inspection the school has adopted the four year plan devised by the Oxford Diocesan Collective Worship group and the stories of Edward Carter to offer a well-planned and thoughtful programme of collective worship based on 'primarily Christian' values which are linked with Bible and other stories, both moral and faith based. This is combined with music, prayer and reflection. Pupils especially enjoy singing and the local clergy contribute their own particular expertise whether musical or magical to create memorable acts of worship. One notable one involved lying on a bed of nails. This link with the clergy is beneficial in establishing the different elements, rituals and symbols of the Anglican tradition and the major festivals of the church year are marked by services in the church. One pupil said, 'We have our own church'. The atmosphere during the worship was thoughtful and calm with some pupil involvement; Year 6 pupils write their own prayer book which is regularly used by pupils for worship. All staff attend collective worship and once a week there is an open invitation to parents to join the school; parents value the opportunity to join the children whether in the church or in school for the spiritual content of the worship. There is a close working link between school and clergy in planning the worship and rigorous and probing monitoring and evaluation of its impact by staff and governors. In a quiet class worship session around a lit candle, Year 1&2 children were observed choosing a type of prayer and offering their own extempore prayers, in this case 'I'm sorry' prayers. Class worship is developing and will, it is hoped, give opportunities for growing pupil involvement in the planning and leadership of worship. Overall, worship is seen as important to the life of the school and increasingly consistent use of the term worship rather than assembly underlines the contribution it makes to the life of the school.

#### **The effectiveness of the Religious Education is good**

In response to the last SIAS report the school now follows the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE and values further input from the diocese. As a result, RE is well-planned, taught and resourced, with thought-provoking, differentiated tasks to extend pupils of all abilities. The school values and benefits from the various faiths and cultures represented in its community and aims to capitalise on the first-hand experience of such pupils. Visits to churches such as Christ Church Cathedral as well as to the holy places of other faith communities are an important part of the visits programme and contribute to spirituality and the understanding of similarities and differences within a framework of inclusion and respect. A new RE coordinator has recently been appointed. A thorough RE book scrutiny has been conducted for the last three years and monitoring of teaching by the coordinator, RE governor and diocesan adviser. Thorough assessments covering all aspects of the RE curriculum and both attainment targets are completed every term. Increasingly marking is of a high standard employing the tools used in other subject areas such as 'three stars and a wish'. The result of monitoring is shared with staff as the basis for development. RE is seen as a valuable part of the curriculum by all teachers and they pass on their interest and enthusiasm. Most practice is good or outstanding and the new coordinator aims to bring all practice to the level of the best and to monitor value added in RE terms. A striking anomaly in this well-informed environment was the lack of knowledge about St Barnabas and the significance of the school's logo, the St Barnabas rose.

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

The governing body is committed and pro-active, acting quickly recently to address a dip in levels of attainment through initiatives such as Big Writing and the Aspiration Network Project for maths and other support through the local Cherwell partnership. They are fully supportive of the mission statement which is revisited at each governors' meeting and its relevance to the life of the school and the effectiveness of committees is assessed. Stakeholders assert that the school is becoming more confidently Christian. Staff value the supportive family team in which they work and appreciate the fact that their professional development needs are met, Parents are very positive about the school, its ethos and atmosphere, and confident that any concerns are speedily and sensitively met and the needs of individuals addressed. They feel they are kept well-informed and involved in the life of the school and their children's progress and development. The school is a key player in the life of the local community which functions as an urban village and school news is circulated through the church-produced community newsletter 'Jericho Matters'. Pupils enjoy finding out about other faiths and cultures around the world and are well aware of the needs of others who may be less fortunate; 'We want to share our opportunities', said one pupil. The school is actively seeking global links.