

# Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA)

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 131164           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Milton Keynes    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 381626           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 25–26 April 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Lynn Alexander   |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 426  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Beverley Delaney   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Huw Humphreys  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 11–12 February 2009  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Singleton Drive<br>Grange Farm<br>Milton Keynes<br>MK8 0PZ |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01908 867356   |
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|---------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11             |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 25–26 April 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 381626           |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Lynn Alexander

Additional inspector

Melanie Knowles

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Byrne

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons taught by 16 teachers, amounting to a total of 11 hours. They also heard pupils read and observed two acts of collective worship. In addition, meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered the responses in 123 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 16 received from staff and 98 from pupils.

## Information about the school

Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. About one third of pupils join the school other than at the usual times, a higher proportion than that found nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as are the proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. There are breakfast and after-school clubs managed by the governing body that were included in the inspection. Since the previous inspection the school has had two interim headteachers. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2011.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>3</b> |

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because teaching does not allow pupils to make fast enough progress and because development planning does not show clearly enough how the success of actions will be measured. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average. However, pupils' achievement is higher in English than it is in mathematics. Most pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress from the time they join the school.
- Teachers make lessons interesting but they do not always ensure that pupils know exactly what to do. Sometimes, because lesson plans are not appropriately matched to pupils' abilities and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve, pupils do not develop their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics quickly enough. Teachers' feedback does not always show pupils what to do to improve, or allow time for them to correct their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. There is a consistent approach to the management of behaviour that pupils understand and to which almost all respond well. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and to others. They speak knowledgeably about all forms of bullying and know whom to turn to if they have concerns.
- Senior leaders and the governing body set appropriate priorities for the school. Senior and middle leaders have begun to address weaknesses in teaching. The school is an inclusive and harmonious community. However, the monitoring of the impact of the school's improvement plan is not systematic enough. The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, by sharpening curriculum planning and evaluation at all levels so that:
  - the work set more closely matches the needs and abilities of all pupils
  - pupils develop their knowledge of and skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics more quickly.
- By July 2013, improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
  - pupils fully understand what is expected of them in lessons
  - teachers have high expectations of pupils and teach lessons with appropriate pace and challenge for all groups of pupils
  - marking and feedback are consistently good across the school so that pupils understand how to improve their work and are given time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders and managers at all levels by ensuring a more rigorous and quantifiable evaluation of the actions taken to secure improvement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children join the school with levels of skills and knowledge below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language skills. There was a dip in children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2011. However, children currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making at least satisfactory progress. Pupils who moved on to join Key Stage 1 in 2011 are now making good progress from their low starting points. Standards in reading are satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 1 and there has been an improvement in writing.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although pupils make more progress in English than in mathematics. Inspectors found that the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory and that it has improved from below-average levels in 2011. Rising standards across the school are the result of carefully targeted intervention and actions taken by school leaders to improve the quality of teaching.

Most parents and carers think their children make good progress. Inspectors found, however, that most pupils make only satisfactory progress from their starting points. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson on partitioning in mathematics, some pupils struggled because they did not have secure knowledge of the computation skills required to complete the task. When reading to inspectors, some pupils guessed words because they were not always able to use the appropriate phonic skills to read

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unfamiliar words. Learning objectives are outlined at the start of lessons, but pupils are not always sure exactly what is expected of them, and consequently they find it difficult to set about their work independently. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, because there was not enough information about the tasks, pupils were slow to settle and achieve their objectives. In a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However their individual targets are not always reviewed regularly and therefore opportunities are missed to accelerate progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They enthuse and motivate pupils. Teaching promotes the school's commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing opportunities for turn taking and by reinforcing expectations of good behaviour. As one parent commented, 'My child has been excited about the topics covered. This is due to her teacher who inspires her.'

The teaching of reading is satisfactory overall. There are some good elements, such as the teaching of library skills. However, inspectors observed that the teaching of reading does not sufficiently address some aspects such as 'tricky words'. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory. Teachers identify what pupils need to do next and they are well supported by teaching assistants. However, there is little evidence of the impact of interventions on achievement because the success criteria on pupils' individual education plans do not relate to quantifiable progress.

Almost all parents and carers think that their children are taught well. However, inspectors do not completely endorse these views as the quality of teaching in the school is inconsistent. In the good lessons, teachers use questioning effectively and encourage pupils to explain their answers. As a result, pupils are able to extend their thinking and improve their knowledge. For example, in a good Key Stage 2 writing lesson, pupils were able to explain how they would write using the third person. However, this level of challenge was not evident in all lessons. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks during the inspection showed little indication of consistently high expectations about the quality or quantity of work expected from pupils. Sometimes, teachers plan too many activities in a lesson, and consequently pupils do not have time to complete work or produce extended pieces. Teachers usually deal promptly with misconceptions in lessons by asking questions and giving feedback. Nevertheless, teachers' written feedback does not consistently provide pupils with enough guidance about how to improve their work. Insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to correct their work and so avoid the repetition of errors.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school's thoughtful, thorough and systematic approach to improving behaviour has secured significant improvement over time. One parent commented, 'The school has set high behavioural standards and expectations and shared these with all parents and pupils.' All staff have a consistent approach to the management of behaviour. Consequently, pupils know what is expected of them. They recognise the fairness of any sanctions and like the Golden Rules and reward system. There are examples of marked improvements in behaviour for some pupils. As one pupil told an inspector, 'Some don't start off doing the right thing but people help them change.' A very small minority of parents, carers and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour and safety and, where relevant, these concerns were shared with the school. However, inspectors found that most concerns related to the behaviour of very few pupils and that the school takes appropriate and swift action when necessary.

Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and talked with confidence about how to deal with them. They know whom to talk to if they have concerns. Most parents and carers think the school deals with any incidents well. Pupils have a generally good understanding of the risks they face and how to keep themselves safe in school and outside. They have a good understanding of internet safety.

Pupils demonstrate the impact of the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their attitudes to each other and to adults. They are polite and welcoming. Their conduct in and around the school is often exemplary, as seen in the act of collective worship led by the school's chaplain. As a result, the learning environment of the school is positive and purposeful. Behaviour is at its best in lessons when the quality of teaching is good and work matches pupils' needs. Pupils' attendance and punctuality have improved and are now above average.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, has successfully raised teachers' confidence and motivated staff in a drive to improve the school after an extended period of turbulence. The impact of this can be seen in the improvements in pupils' behaviour. Teachers speak highly of the school's approach to professional development and of the way senior leaders support them and challenge them to improve. Middle leaders, who are new to post, model good practice and demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. Senior leaders are clearly focused on improving teaching and tackling underperformance. However, because improvement plans do not regularly include measurable criteria, there is insufficient opportunity for a rigorous and quantifiable evaluation of the success of actions taken to secure improvement.

The school tackles discrimination well and promotes equality satisfactorily. As a result, there is evidence of improving progress for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although these improvements are not yet evident for all groups of pupils, including

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the more able.

The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through music. A recent moving stories project promoted reflection on, and the celebration of, the different cultural groups within the school community. Support and challenge from the knowledgeable and committed governing body, together with effective partnerships with the local authority and with other schools, contribute to the school's capacity to improve further. There is good pastoral support for new entrants. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, the school has developed effective relationships with parents and carers that help them to support their children's learning and provide valued support to families, for example through the work of the learning mentor. The vast majority of parents and carers confirmed this in their response to the questionnaire and in discussion with inspectors. One parent commented, 'I have a clearer understanding of where the school is going, behaviour policy and how the children are taught. Most importantly my daughter enjoys school.'



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 46  | 46   | 8            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 8   | 47   | 40           | 5          |
| Secondary schools    | 14  | 38   | 40           | 8          |
| Special schools      | 28  | 48   | 20           | 4          |
| Pupil referral units | 15  | 50   | 29           | 5          |
| All schools          | 11  | 46   | 38           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance                 | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour                  | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.                            |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety                     | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA), Milton Keynes MK8 0PZ**

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed coming to see your lessons and hearing you read. We enjoyed coming to your assemblies too. Your parents and carers are pleased with the school. This letter is to tell you that we found that Christ the Sower provides you with a satisfactory education. Here are some of the best things we found.

- You are helpful, thoughtful and kind to those who need help.
- Almost all of you behave well in and around the school and you get on very well with your teachers, teaching assistants and your friends.
- You enjoy your lessons so you come to school regularly and get there on time.
- All the staff care about how well you are doing and how happy you are.
- You have a good understanding about how to keep safe.

To help your school to be even better we have asked your headteacher and senior leaders to make sure that:

- you know what you are going to learn in lessons and what you have to do
- everyone has work to do that helps them to make the best possible progress and that you all work as hard as you can
- your teachers help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work and give you time to do it.

You can help your school by continuing to work hard and enjoying all that you do.

We send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Alexander  
Lead inspector

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