

St Christopher's Church of England School, Cowley

Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HB

Inspection dates

18–19 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has established an ethos of high expectation and raised aspirations, which has led to improved outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' welfare and safety have the highest priority. Pupils are happy, safe and well looked after because of the positive relationships they have with each other and with adults in school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, reflecting the school's Christian values of 'love, courage and belonging'. Pupils are highly tolerant of each other's differences in this inclusive school.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective. They have led the improvement in the quality of teaching through skilful monitoring, support and challenge.
- Children in the early years make good progress as a result of the effective teaching they receive. They are well cared for and enjoy learning.
- Pupils at key stage 1, particularly those who are disadvantaged, make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Phonics is particularly well taught. Pupils enjoy learning phonics and confidently apply their skills effectively.
- Progress and attainment at key stage 2 are improving for current pupils, because the vast majority of teaching has improved and is now good. Still, more can be done to challenge pupils from their different starting points and help those pupils who need to catch up, particularly in mathematics.
- Effective support helps pupils new to speaking English, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged to make increasingly good progress.
- The Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust provides highly effective support and challenge to school leaders. Together, they evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses well. However, new members of the local governing body need to carry out their roles more effectively.
- Attendance has improved, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, some pupils do not come to school regularly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.
- Further develop the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers, especially in key stage 2, plan activities that provide sustained challenge for pupils from their different starting points and help those who fall behind to catch up more quickly, particularly in mathematics.
- Further improve the quality of the local governing body by ensuring that new governors know how to carry out their roles more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's vision and dedication have transformed the school. She has made sure that pupils' welfare and safety is the top priority and raised aspirations among staff of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils are happy, keen learners who, as one parent said, 'can't wait to come to school in the morning'.
- The headteacher, working closely with her able senior leadership team, has made sure that teachers constantly improve their skills. A robust performance management system holds teachers to account and helps identify teachers' training needs. High-quality training, often provided by the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, has helped to improve the quality of teaching so that it is now good. Teachers are positive about the changes they have made. They feel valued and glad to be a part of the school.
- The headteacher, supported by leaders of the trust, evaluates the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. She has prioritised developing a skilled middle leadership team to ensure that teaching and learning are well led. These leaders monitor the effectiveness of teaching, offering advice and support where teachers need to enhance their skills or want to try something new. They identify any groups of learners who need extra help. However, they do not yet evaluate the impact of the work they have been doing thoroughly enough.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting. Pupils enjoy a wide variety of lessons taught by specialists, including Spanish, computing and art. Pupils further hone their literacy and numeracy skills across the whole curriculum; leaders place an emphasis on 'real-life' problem-solving to develop skills of independence and leadership and to help prepare pupils for their next stages of education. Trips to places of local interest support the curriculum. Pupils said that they thoroughly enjoyed a recent visit to Sulgrave Manor where they dressed up in Tudor costumes: 'We got to do what they did and it helped us understand their lives.'
- Sports funding is used effectively to encourage pupils to be active and to enable staff to teach a broad range of sports. Pupils particularly value the Year 6 'sports crew' who organise activities at lunchtime using a vast array of play equipment. Extra-curricular sporting activities are well attended, including one run by specialist football coaches who help enhance pupils' football skills. Parents as well as pupils said that they enjoyed the 'family fun' day which promoted the value of kick-starting healthy lifestyles.
- Pupil premium and special educational needs funding is used well. Pupils who need help to catch up experience extra teaching from a range of specialist teachers and assistants in addition to the main curriculum. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked, and advice from outside agencies is sought if pupils are in danger of falling behind.
- Pupils who are new to speaking English are particularly well supported in the early years and in key stage 1. A specialist assistant and a home-school link worker engage highly effectively with families and pupils to share ways of helping to develop English language skills. However, more could be done for the small number of pupils in key stage 2 who still need support to learn English.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. Pupils mix very well with those of different cultures and religions both in class and at playtimes. They are highly accepting and respectful of people's differences. As one pupil said, 'Being different can be even better; all that matters is that you are loved.'
- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is a strength of the school. Daily reflection enables pupils to develop the school values of 'love, courage and belonging'. In one lesson, pupils sensitively made links between the courage of Martin Luther King and their own life in modern Britain by considering the courage people in Britain need when trying new things and making good choices.

Governance of the school

- The Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust provides highly effective support and challenge to school leaders because of its deep understanding of the school and its context in the community. Together with the school's leaders, the trust ensures that school self-evaluation and identified areas for improvement are sharply focused so that the school has rapidly improved since it became an academy.
- The local governing body carries out its statutory duties appropriately. Governors have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, recent turbulence in membership of the local governing body means that currently the role of chair is vacant and some governors are new and inexperienced. As a result, the local governing body is being supported effectively by the trust, particularly in understanding how to hold leaders to account more effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' welfare has the strongest priority in this school. Adults are well trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures and use the school's systems effectively to raise any concerns. Leaders ensure that help from outside agencies is accessed for pupils who need it. They keep clear and detailed records of concerns, actions and outcomes.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe around school and at home, including online. Pupils know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Parents confirm that their children feel both safe and happy at school.
- Governors carry out their safeguarding duties effectively. They have managed well the challenges of keeping the site secure, recently improving the safety of one entrance to the school.
- Leaders and governors make sure that safer recruitment procedures are followed effectively. Trained staff are involved in interviews, employment checks are suitably rigorous and the single central record is accurate and up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and improving. This is because of regular monitoring by leaders and insightful feedback about strengths and areas to improve. In addition, experienced teachers provide good role models and support for less experienced colleagues. New staff say that they feel highly valued and have been welcomed warmly as they begin their teaching career.
- Key stage leaders and subject specialists support teachers' planning so that it effectively meets the requirements of the curriculum. Activities capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning so that in most year groups pupils make good progress. Pupils often work cooperatively with one another. This was seen in literacy, where pupils eagerly helped each other use rich vocabulary to improve their stories about Norse gods.
- Teachers use assessment information well to identify what pupils already know and what they need to do next. 'Red hot tasks' add a level of challenge for pupils who are eager to stretch themselves. However, in some cases, too long is spent reviewing what pupils can already do, so that some pupils, particularly those who are most able, do not make the progress they are capable of. Leaders are working effectively to minimise these inconsistencies.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported so that, in key stage 1 especially, these pupils do not fall behind. In key stage 2, teachers use the information they have about pupils' strengths and gaps to make sure that those who need it are helped to catch up.
- Teaching rightly focuses on supporting the needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language. In key stage 1, a specialist assistant expertly works with pupils and families of those new to English. In key stage 2, some teachers use strategies designed to help pupils unfamiliar with English access the curriculum. In particular, the school is making sure that pupils' understanding of vocabulary is improved.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers to adeptly support the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They adjust levels of support appropriately so that pupils do not become over-reliant on adults' help.
- Mathematics teaching is improving as a result of leaders' actions. Effective training has enabled teachers to better meet the demands of the new mathematics curriculum. Teachers address misconceptions quickly, which aids pupils' understanding of concepts. For example, a class discussion about possible methods of calculating numbers to a decimal place helped pupils understand the most effective method and allowed them to move their learning on swiftly. While the majority of current pupils do now make good progress, leaders are aware that some need to make accelerated progress to attain in line with pupils nationally.
- A consistent approach to teaching reading is leading to improved outcomes for pupils, particularly at key stage 1. Phonics is especially well taught. In the early years, children enthusiastically become familiar with the sounds letters represent through games and songs. In Years 1 and 2, pupils confidently sound out unfamiliar words and make predictions about what these words might mean by looking at the context of the sentence as a whole.

- Reading remains a priority in key stage 2. Pupils love reading and can read fluently. However, they do not always understand the context of what they are reading. Leaders are addressing this by adapting the curriculum to make sure that pupils are introduced to more vocabulary than they have been in the past. This is helping current pupils to make more rapid progress in both reading and writing.
- The teaching of writing is improving. Pupils are clear how to structure their work and know how to make their writing lively and interesting for the reader. Pupils are developing good editing skills, self-correcting their work and offering each other advice on improvements. In some cases, the most able pupils are challenged highly effectively, sometimes moving away from the original structure so that they can be truly creative in their approach. However, this level of challenge is not consistent across the school.
- Strong questioning results in pupils explaining their understanding well. For example, in mathematics, pupils in Year 6 explained why rounding up and down is appropriate to avoid overspending against a budget. In literacy, the most able pupils in Year 5 spoke confidently about how to make sure their writing gripped the reader's attention from the start.
- A small minority of teaching does not help pupils to make good progress where teaching does not stretch pupils' understanding or does not engage pupils well enough. Sometimes, pupils are too shy to say that they do not understand what to do, so do not get help quickly enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils from all backgrounds thrive in this inclusive school. The vast majority of pupils are confident, self-aware and happy to talk to adults about their school and their learning. Older pupils play with younger ones at breaktimes, modelling how to play well. Trained buddies talk to anyone who might be on their own or feeling sad, to make sure that they are okay.
- Pupils' confidence and resilience are further developed through attending the forest school. Here pupils actively engage in activities such as rope-walking and learn to ask for help when they need it and to talk about their experiences positively. Leaders are now making sure that those pupils who need to transfer these skills to the classroom do so.
- Pupils value the different ways they are able to develop leadership skills. These include helping each other with their learning in class and taking part in school council meetings, where ideas about how to improve the school are discussed.
- Pupils understand that there are different types of bullying, including by using social media. They can explain why bullying is wrong. School records show that bullying of any type is very rare, but that if it does happen it is swiftly and effectively dealt with. Pupils and parents agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are friendly towards each other and very positive about school. The vast majority of pupils are keen to learn and behave well both in and outside of lessons.
- Pupils value the strong relationships with their teachers, which help them to learn well. Where pupils' attitudes to learning have in the past been poor, leaders have focused carefully on improving them, particularly by praising pupils when they show good learning behaviours. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are low and reducing.
- Where teaching is not challenging, or when transitions between activities are not well managed, pupils sometimes struggle to behave well. Leaders are highly aware of this and act swiftly to address any issues by supporting teachers in their planning and behaviour management.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the school became an academy, including for disadvantaged pupils. A range of effective sanctions and rewards are used to encourage good attendance.
- The number of pupils persistently absent has reduced. The skilled home-school link worker liaises particularly well with families in the early years to highlight the importance of coming to school. Her work is especially effective in preventing persistent absence. However, there are still too many pupils who do not come to school regularly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Stronger teaching is leading to improved achievement for current pupils, particularly in key stage 1. The progress of the majority of pupils in key stage 2 is strong.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below that of other pupils nationally. However, despite low starting points, current pupils are attaining more highly than previous pupils. Leaders and teachers are raising aspirations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils leaving Year 6 in 2016 had made less progress in reading than other pupils nationally, particularly disadvantaged pupils and girls. Detailed scrutiny of the progress of current pupils shows that progress in reading has improved throughout the school, including for disadvantaged pupils and for girls.
- The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards by the end of key stage 1 last year was similar to national figures. More most-able pupils than in most schools nationally reached the highest levels of attainment, known as 'greater depth', in all subjects. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils that reached at least the expected standard, and those who reached greater depth, was above national figures in all subjects.
- Children in the early years make strong progress from their starting points. Although a slightly lower proportion of children achieve a good level of development in the early years compared with nationally, this difference is diminishing well over time. Current children are making even more rapid progress than previous cohorts.

- Provision for the teaching of phonics is good. Current pupils are making good progress and achieving well. The proportion of pupils that met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose above the national average in 2016. There was a particularly marked improvement for disadvantaged pupils.
- Observations of learning and a scrutiny of books of current pupils showed that pupils who speak English as an additional language make accelerated progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with pupils nationally in reading and writing. However, progress in mathematics is below the national average. Leaders and governors have highlighted this as a priority for improvement.
- Where progress is weaker, leaders have scrutinised why this is the case. They are ensuring that a variety of additional support for pupils and teachers is starting to have an impact. Leaders know that work to improve attainment is ongoing, particularly in mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- The highly skilled early years leader has made sure that the curriculum is well planned to provide stimulating and demanding experiences which help children learn well. She leads her team of teachers and assistants effectively to make sure that children in the early years are especially well cared for and make good progress.
- Teachers work closely with parents to assess children's starting points, and use this information to plan a curriculum for each child which helps them to make good progress. A specialist assistant helps children who are new to English develop their verbal skills. The pupil premium is spent effectively to provide additional teaching for pupils who enter the school with low starting points to quickly catch up.
- The early years environment is stimulating and vibrant. The class theme of Goldilocks was evident through vibrant displays on walls and the classroom set up to look like children are in the story. This encouraged children to become familiar with the story and reflect it in their play, for example when pretending to eat porridge in the mud kitchen.
- Children demonstrate sensible behaviour at all times. They are considerate to each other, for example when working in pairs to match numbers. Children are confident learners, happily asking and answering questions which further their understanding of the world around them.
- Teachers encourage children in their learning through the skilful use of praise, and children praise each other when they succeed. For example, in a phonics lesson, children eagerly guessed which sound their friends were making and enthusiastically clapped each other when they pointed to the correct letters represented by the sound.
- Children enjoy choosing from a wide range of activities, which are well matched to all the areas of the curriculum. Most of these activities challenge children to develop their skills and language well. Children were particularly enthusiastic when planting in the outdoor garden and when running on the trail made from wooden blocks. However, in

some cases, children were unsure why they were doing an activity, or the activity they were doing did not advance their learning sufficiently.

- Teachers in the early years share key information about children's welfare, abilities and skills with Year 1 teachers so that children experience a smooth transition into Year 1. Leaders make sure that children are ready to start Year 1, for example by teaching phonics in a similar way and by using the same style of writing throughout the school.
- Safeguarding is effective. All welfare requirements are fully met. All staff are vigilant in ensuring that the environment is safe. They are well qualified and receive annual training in safeguarding and child protection. The early years leader and home-school link worker work particularly well with parents new to the school so that parents understand the importance of coming to school regularly.

School details

Unique reference number	140556
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10024485

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Kate Janko
Headteacher	Sheenagh Broadbent
Telephone number	01865 779772
Website	www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.3252@st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Christopher's Church of England School is a larger than average-sized primary school on the outskirts of Oxford.
- The proportion of pupils from multi-ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The school is part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The school uses no alternative providers of education.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook observations of pupils' learning in 27 lessons or parts of lessons. Some of these observations were carried out with school leaders.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and groups of teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with a group of governors and a representative of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- Inspectors worked alongside school leaders to review the work of a cross-section of pupils. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school self-evaluation and improvement plans, school policies, pupil performance information, behaviour logs and information about attendance.
- A review of safeguarding was carried out, including a check of the single central record and a scrutiny of child protection documents and safeguarding policies.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including free text comments, the 45 responses to the staff survey and the 58 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Cale

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Gadd

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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