



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Cranfield Church of England Academy

Court Road
Cranfield
Bedford
MK43 0DR

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: N/A

Date of inspection: 5 November 2015

Date of last inspection: September 2010

School's unique reference number: 137853

Headteacher: Joanna Farbon

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Cranfield Church of England Academy recently celebrated its 150th birthday and became an Academy in 2012. Most of its 295 pupils are from a White British background, but the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. There are 19 different languages spoken, and the proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is above average. The headteacher was appointed in April 2012, with the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher also taking up their posts since the last inspection.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Cranfield as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- Cranfield's distinctive Christian character is firmly embedded in all school life. This is because the school is a family based on Christian values so all can flourish and enjoy, achieve and learn.
- The Christian vision and commitment of the headteacher and senior leaders in partnership with the governors ensures the highest priority is given to serving the children and their families.
- The quality of collective worship and religious education[RE] in this nurturing and inclusive Christian community makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development.

Areas to improve

- Ensure pupils deepen their knowledge of the Anglican Church at an international level and enhance the programme of visits and visitors to nurture pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- Enable children and adults to enrich their understanding of God as Father, Son and Spirit at an age appropriate level, to nurture their personal and spiritual growth.

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

Cranfield's strong distinctive Christian character stands proudly at the heart of all school life. This is because the school is a family, based on Christian values, such as honesty, respect and perseverance. Children, families and staff of all faiths and none are warmly welcomed, contributing much to the school's cultural diversity. This is the strength of the school's Christian character. Indeed it is the golden thread running through the inspiring, innovative and meaningful curriculum and, consequently, the high standards Cranfield achieves. Moreover, the school is passionate about every child thriving as an independent learner within a nurturing and inclusive Christian community. Consequently, Cranfield's young pupils 'enjoy, achieve and learn' with every child making progress and succeeding. Most pupils achieve levels well above the national average, with many pupils achieving exceptional standards in all year groups. Pupils with special educational need and those for whom English is not their first language, receive very effective support and make good progress very quickly. Every class teacher creates an environment where the culture of responding to feedback and teachers' marking is very strong. Learning within a spirit of co-operation and resilience makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal Christian spiritual character. In addition, pupils' own learning journey is supported by the Stepping Stones approach. This has been enormously successful for all children, and their parents, to feel a sense of pride in their achievement. Attendance is above the national average. The school attributes this to their distinctive Christian character being hugely supportive as the children want to learn and are excited to be in this safe, secure Christian environment. There have been no exclusions because the very thorough behaviour policy is based upon the Christian understanding of forgiveness, fresh starts and being respectful and kind. In addition, children are encouraged to employ positive reflection to make choices and put things right, linked to the school's golden rules. As a result, relationships are excellent and behaviour is exemplary, with children thriving on praise with the confidence to try and succeed. Everyone in this community strives to 'be Cranfield' and model the school's chosen values. This includes the parents. An excellent example of the way that Christian values are woven into the life of the school is seen in parents awarding hard earned values feathers. Pupils have to show values in action outside school to be awarded a feather for Clive the Crane, who symbolises the school. Cranfield children respect and value difference. This is because the school community is diverse and pupils celebrate their diverse faiths with each other through worship and religious education [RE]. In addition, there is a zero tolerance of racism and bullying. This is because of the immensely strong and embedded Christian ethos of the school. Cranfield's strong commitment towards national and global charity work supports pupils' global awareness and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development. Pupils are enthusiastic about their RE which is regarded as a core subject, alongside Maths and English. As such, it makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' SMSC development. Pupils can relate the Christmas and Easter story well, but are less secure in their knowledge of Ascension and Pentecost. However, the school recognises that meeting people of faith, either at school or in a place of worship, helps deepen pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures, enriching their spiritual and cultural development. In addition, the school acknowledges and correctly identifies that deepening pupils' knowledge of Christianity as an international multi-cultural faith nurtures their personal and spiritual growth. The school recognises that such engagement with the global dimension, especially relating to the international Christian community, is not yet fully realised.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding.

Integral to the worship at Cranfield is the Bible and its stories. These are linked to the Christian value of the month and the church year, with a strong focus on Anglican traditions. Immense value is placed on collective worship from the whole community, which is viewed as the foundation of each school day. A great sense of trust, respect and celebration is carried through into daily life. Cranfield pupils, staff and visitors discuss and interrogate big questions such as

‘Who is God?’ and ‘What is Trinity?’ as part of the school’s RE Trio. Consequently, there are high levels of spiritual reflection and engagement amongst this community. They go on to ask, ‘How do I talk to God?’ which demonstrates the importance of prayer in the life of the school. This includes times to pray together as a school and time to pray in classes. Pupils enjoy creating their own prayers for their class prayer books and using them in class. Good examples include one child’s Haribo prayer. This celebrates ‘the heart for the love He gave’ and the bear represents ‘the animals that live’. Pupil participation, including planning and leading, is a key part of worship and reflection. As part of the academy’s parliament, there are minsters of worship. This is a new role for pupils to experience and helps provide valuable pupil voice. Worship is currently evaluated on a weekly basis by senior leaders, teachers and children through the headteacher’s tea parties and end of year questionnaires. It is very evident that effective feedback makes an important contribution to the high quality of worship. Pupils enjoy weekly worship led by the local ‘Open the Book’ team. They comment, ‘the storytellers visit us each week’. They go on to say they ‘like learning about God and all the different stories Jesus told’. Such worship involves and engages the pupils and their parents. It always links to the value of the month, such as honesty and ‘asking God to help you make the right choices’. The rector is a welcome and regular visitor to school. Parents value immensely attending the half termly church worship at St Peter and St Paul. Children have a very good age appropriate knowledge of Christianity. However, they are less secure about their knowledge of the saints to whom their parish church is dedicated. Some pupils speak of St Paul as ‘one of God’s messengers’. Celebrating key festivals throughout the church year helps pupils have an understanding of the Anglican faith. They are growing in their understanding of the Trinity and reflect on how they can speak to, and sing about, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They comment, ‘you can pray to the Holy Spirit, Son and God. Everyone can pray.’ However, the school recognises the need to help children and adults develop their understanding of this key Christian belief at an age appropriate level to nurture and enrich individual spiritual journeys.

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

Leadership at Cranfield is very strong with shared, collaborative and yet clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This is because the headteacher, senior staff and governors all have a strong vision and commitment to Cranfield’s ethos and culture. This is embraced by everyone who all work hard to ensure the school’s Christian values underpin ‘Living God’s Love’. Excellent examples include the whole school objectives which regularly and robustly focus on Cranfield’s distinctive Christian character. Governors constantly ask, ‘How can we ensure our pupils, staff and parents are happy, engaged and active in a Christian and values based environment?’ The wellbeing and the potential for all pupils to succeed is a core belief and priority for governors. Their exemplary monitoring and evaluation intrinsically incorporates key questions and steps to success. They also strategically evaluate how quality first teaching improves attainment and progress. Staff regularly ask themselves how the school’s Christian ethos is unique to Cranfield. They go on to seek answers as to how Christian values and worship shape the life of the school. It is very evident that parental and pupil engagement is very strong. Parents find their voice through the parents’ forums and pupils through the parliament. Parents strongly testify that Cranfield’s high expectations and subsequent standards are ‘inclusive of everybody’, ensuring everyone can thrive and succeed. There is great collaboration and commitment from all staff which involves pupils and is shared with parents, thus ensuring consistency and excellent progress throughout the school. Cranfield’s Christian values, such as perseverance, very effectively contribute to the school’s high standards. As a result, pupils’ personal spiritual growth is excellent. RE and values are formally reported on in end of year reports. As part of their on-going work, governors monitor whole school objectives in RE in order to develop teaching, learning and progress. The leadership of RE and worship is given high priority as these two exceedingly important aspects of the school’s distinctive Christian character are led by senior teachers. All areas of development from the previous inspection have been addressed, with the school identifying clear priorities for future action. Governors successfully promote the

wellbeing of staff and support their training needs. These address succession planning and support for leadership roles and responsibilities. The strengthened staff team and governors have benefitted from diocesan training. Newsletters successfully communicate the school's Christian vision and values to parents. International Week celebrated the school's diversity, greatly helped by parents who contribute much to the life of the school. They say they feel fully involved as partners in their children's education. This extends to running clubs, such as Arabic and French. The headteacher takes a lead in sharing good practice to support professional development and mentoring those new to headship of church schools in the diocese. Community links are strong. This is especially true of the partnership between church and school, which enriches the lives of the children and their families. Excellent examples include the bi-annual Christmas Tree festival as well as Remembrance Day commemorations when the school choir sang 'to remember the soldiers once more'.

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