



**Standlake Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Church End  
Standlake  
Witney  
Oxfordshire  
OX29 7SQ

**Diocese: Oxford**

Local authority: Oxfordshire  
Date of inspection: 4 February 2013  
Date of last inspection: 26 February 2008  
School's unique reference number: 123111  
Headteacher: Sandra Connell  
Inspector's name and number: Jenny Earp 288

**School context**

Standlake Church of England Primary is a small school located in the picturesque village of Standlake, close to Witney and Oxford. There are currently 129 pupils on roll and school numbers are increasing. Recent building work and refurbishment has caused a certain amount of disruption, but has greatly improved the facilities at the school. The headteacher has been in post for 9 years.

**The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Standlake Primary as a Church of England school are good**

The school has a unique identity as a caring, inclusive school, which is successful in promoting a strong Christian ethos. Standlake's three core values of 'build, believe and belong' help to provide a culture where everyone works in harmony together. The close links with the local church and community have a very positive effect on the pupils at the school.

**Established strengths**

- The headteacher's clear vision and her dedication to the well-being of pupils
- Well behaved, happy learners, whose relationships reflect the school's caring ethos
- The outstanding contribution of the rector to collective worship and the school's Christian foundation

**Focus for development**

- Explore opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for elements of collective worship
- Increase pupils' understanding of cultural diversity through visits and visitors
- Revise the school's mission statement in order to ensure the Christian ethos at the school is firmly embedded in and across the curriculum

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

A caring atmosphere and Christian ethos pervade all aspects of school life. Parents speak highly of the school and particularly appreciate the lengths staff go to ensure all families feel welcome and valued. They say their children are happy and well cared for in this very inclusive school. Pupils are confident and articulate, expressing their pride in the school. For example, they eagerly describe their part in designing the new school logo and are able to explain its symbolism. The school provides good curriculum enrichment, including a wide range of clubs, such as the very popular choir, which recently performed at the O2 Arena in London, as well as at the church during advent. The school's core values are well known to the children, who say they try to 'live' these values every day. Children have a moral awareness of the differences between right and wrong, giving examples from Bible stories they have heard. This was observed in two religious education lessons on the day of the inspection. Both lessons were well planned and the teachers created positive learning environments. Pupils show excellent behaviour and readily accept responsibilities they are given, such as acting as 'buddies' to support the younger ones. Older pupils say they particularly enjoy opportunities to assist in the Foundation Stage

Unit, the playground and with different year groups on Friday afternoons. The school environment is used to promote the distinctive Christian character very effectively. For example, a permanent mosaic, prominently placed at the entrance of the school, shows the tree of life, with a cross at its centre. The school also makes good use of its grounds to encourage pupils in their spiritual development. In particular, 'the peace garden', a space for reflection and prayer, was recently dedicated by the Bishop of Dorchester and has great significance to everyone at the school. The central focus of this special garden is a beautiful sculpture of a fish, covered in many symbols of God's creation, which pupils helped to design. Even the younger pupils have an understanding of Christian values, such as love, kindness and giving, readily describing how well pupils at the school treat each other. Religious education is well led and managed and is often taught in a cross-curricular manner, such as a Key Stage 1 topic entitled 'Long, long ago'. The coordinator reports that there have been few visits to any diverse places of worship in recent years. The Christian character of the school supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

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

Collective worship occupies an important place in the school day and is delivered effectively by a range of leaders in an atmosphere of calm and purpose. The rector of St Giles church, who is also a foundation governor, provides very valuable and effective support in leading collective worship at the school twice every week and is highly regarded by both pupils and parents. Themes reflect Christian values and acts of worship are often planned to link in with the liturgical year and other events in the Christian calendar. However, the provision for worship is sensitive to the needs of children who may not come from Christian families or have no faith. Pupils speak positively about worship and acknowledge that it is a time to be together as a community, to learn about values, to listen, to sing and to pray. During the inspection, pupils were engaged in worship, listening attentively to the story of Simeon and Anna, in the temple in Jerusalem, afterwards answering questions thoughtfully. Pupils enjoy visiting the local church, taking part in Christian festivals throughout the year. Prayers are written by pupils and displayed around the school, for example, the grace said by everyone before lunch. Pupils understand the meaning of the Lord's Prayer and can explain the importance to Christians of saying sorry, of forgiveness and starting afresh. One Year 1 pupil described worship as 'spending time with God' and another, that 'it helps us to be kind, thoughtful and respectful'. Worship makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development and their understanding of Anglican faith. Parents appreciate receiving invitations to attend class assemblies and very willingly support the school services held in church. Worship meets the needs of children and staff during difficult times in their lives and in the life of the school. There are currently few opportunities for children to devise and lead worship.

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

The headteacher, governors, staff and clergy work well together to ensure that Christian values are demonstrated in all aspects of school life. The headteacher takes the lead in ensuring the Christian vision is realised in the daily life of the school, demonstrating her desire to nurture the spiritual and moral development of pupils, whilst respecting those of other faiths or none. The governors are very supportive and committed to the school, showing that aspects of distinctiveness are important to them. The views of pupils and parents are sought regularly, for instance, in the 'three stars and a wish' programme. Parents support the school very well, in particular through the Friends of Standlake School (FOSS), who provide generous funds and equipment for the school. The whole community values the place of the school at its centre, with one member of the local community writing, 'How impressed I was with the school's choir performance at St. Giles' Church'. This results in strong, mutually-beneficial links with the local church and community. For instance, Sunday school is held in the school building, enthusiastically led by a dedicated governor. The school also benefits from partnerships with other schools in the area, in particular the Eynsham partnership of schools and a special, valued link with the Mulberry Bush School. Pupils feel inspired to make a difference when world events have an impact on them. A good example of this was when the hall was set up as an area of special reflection, following an international disaster. This was a memorable, moving time for both pupils and adults at the school. Christian stewardship can be seen in the school's support for charities such as WaterAid, Helen and Douglas House and Tear Fund. Staff benefit from opportunities for personal, spiritual and professional development. For instance, a teacher at the school recently moved on to a headship position at another church school. Adults at the school provide good role models because of their commitment to the ethos of the school. During happy times and sad, the school views itself as a community pulling together for each other. School leaders are aware that the mission statement is due for review. The areas for development from the previous inspection have all been effectively addressed.