



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Knowl Hill Voluntary Controlled CE Academy

Bath Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG10 9UX

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Oxford

Local authority: N/A

Dates of inspection: 3 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 3 February 2011

School's unique reference number: 141295

Head of School: Nichole Bourner

Executive Principal: Isabel Cooke

Inspector's name and number: Jacque Coles 840

School context

Knowl Hill is a small village school with ninety three pupils on roll. Most of the children are white British and many travel in from outside the village. Since the last inspection, Knowl Hill has become part of Ashley Hill Multi Academy Trust. The school has seen a gradual rise in pupil numbers over recent years, with a bigger rise since becoming an academy in September 2014 when new leadership was appointed. The school has an executive principal (of both Trust schools) with a full-time head of school based at Knowl Hill.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Knowl Hill as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The inspirational leadership and high level commitment of both the executive principal and the head of school, supported by an effective governing body, drives the clear strategic direction of Knowl Hill as a church school.
- The central shared Christian vision and values which permeate all areas of the school, underpin learners' high achievement and outstanding behaviour.
- Thorough and robust self-evaluation has resulted in significant improvements over the last two years.
- Teaching about Jesus provides a model for and builds excellent relationships across the whole community.

Areas to improve

- Increase opportunities to further develop children's written reflection and prayers so that a clear progression in skills is seen throughout the school
- Extend the landscape of this distinctive Christian school community by finding new ways to utilise the children as ambassadors to grow the mutually beneficial relationship with the church and further impact the local community

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

Christian values are certainly at the centre of Knowl Hill. The school's strapline 'Together we succeed' is confirmed by the recognition in The Times of the school as number one in the borough with its 2015 Key Stage 2 results. The school attributes this to the quality of teaching and learning based upon a nurturing Christian character. Good attendance is credited to the school's strong Christian character; parents report that pupils are disappointed if they don't get 100% attendance certificates. Behaviour is exemplary, with children often having the ability to fix any perceived issues themselves, just telling staff that they have resolved any difficulties. Pupils know that they are building their lives on Christian values and say that they are trying to follow Jesus' example. Parents report that the children encourage them to pursue Godly behaviour too! Pupils' personal and spiritual development is encouraged through a celebratory ethos where triumphs are highlighted. A pupil said that they like Fridays because everyone celebrates everyone's hard work. The rewards and sanction system not only has times of celebration, but reflection and reparation when needed. Relationships within the whole school community are strong, growing out of the central Christian values and evidenced by the level of care that members have towards each other. Parents feel the school is like a family and that the staff are an extremely cohesive team. The example of a pupil asking if they could stay another hour at the end of the day is indicative of how much children enjoy being a part of the school. Knowl Hill takes pride in its inclusive and caring ethos, where children of different faith backgrounds are welcomed and where support is enlisted for any struggling families. Teaching alongside educational visits and visitors, supports pupils' knowledge and understanding about other faiths. Links are explored and pursued with multi faith and multicultural communities, helping pupils find out more about Christianity across the world. Pupils are deeply respectful of the differences between people. This is evident in the way that they treat each other and in their natural care for others within the school community. The status of and teaching within collective worship and religious education (RE) contribute well to Knowl Hill's identity as a church school. Parents acknowledge this saying, 'they put morals in a Christian context.' Children enjoy RE and say they discuss 'big' questions of life which helps them to understand Christianity and other faiths. 'We learn stories from the Bible and about Jesus' said one, and others spoke enthusiastically about their visits to the local mosque. Whilst clear opportunities exist within school for discussion and reflection through RE and Philosophy for Children, further reflection experiences could be explored outside the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Worship brings the school community together each day and makes an outstanding contribution to the day-to-day life of the school. Parents and governors enjoy attending and local villagers are also now asking to attend the school's weekly act of worship in the church. This environment for worship reminds pupils that it is a special time. All acts of worship are well planned and organised using key Biblical content to help pupils reflect upon and relate personally to the school's Christian values. A pupil said 'It helps us remember that God is with us and he forgives us when we make mistakes'. All members of the school community say how much they enjoy and are inspired by it; the singing, stories, prayers and participation. A pupil said 'I like the singing because it makes me feel joyful'. Discussions with pupils and the school's records and evaluations demonstrate that high-quality worship is the norm. All pupils have opportunities to plan and lead worship and pupils are very willing to offer their thoughts to the questions posed and also to listen to others. Monitoring and evaluation is well established with surveys of different members of the school community also feeding into next steps for improvement. For example, pupils suggested more involvement and they now enjoy taking responsibility for different elements of worship. Learners have a good understanding of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus and are aware that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is testament to the school, considering that many pupils are from non-church backgrounds. One pupil said 'the values help me be a better person'. The student council delight in choosing charities where they feel they can help and show their care. The church being situated right next to the school, enables their understanding of Anglican practice with well attended celebrations at key times in the church calendar. The incumbent and personnel from other Christian traditions also contribute to leading school

worship. This is greatly appreciated by the pupils and enables them to experience the diversity within Christianity. Opportunities for reflection and prayer exist during the day, in classrooms, in the creation of their own prayers for inclusion in the class book or service, spontaneous prayer and in the focus on church calendar and news events. These allow pupils and adults to pray and reflect meaningfully and parents report that children are becoming more confident in their praying. A parent said that their child now asks their family to say grace before a meal. The quality of the children's written prayers however could be further enhanced so that progression is evident as the children move up through the school.

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

Knowl Hill is in an advantageous position, being part of a multi academy trust with a nearby outstanding church school. The inspirational Christian leadership of both the executive principal and the head of school enables a distinctive vision for Knowl Hill to be clearly promoted and rooted in Christian values. These are woven into all key policies and across the curriculum and are reflected by its members' conduct in the daily life of the school. Detailed evaluations and action plans indicate that leaders share an excellent understanding and high level commitment to the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Self-evaluation as a church school is strategic, comprehensive and very effective. It involves all stakeholders, and leads to succinct steps for improvement. Results from surveys regarding Christian distinctiveness demonstrate that everyone overwhelmingly recognises the effectiveness of Knowl Hill as a church school. This results in high academic achievement and also helps pupils to develop into caring, thoughtful and very well behaved individuals. All pupils are encouraged to fulfil their God-given potential. The leaders are sustained by an active and well briefed governing body who are aware of their duty to challenge the leadership and evaluate church school life. Key issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed and the arrangements for religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The effective RE leader has brought about considerable improvements, by ensuring that all teachers are trained and supported to lead the subject well. The subject is robustly monitored and evaluated. The foundation governors facilitate church-school links, as the incumbent's time is spread across a number of schools, churches and parishes. Pastoral support is given termly to the leaders by another minister who is an academy director. Recruitment and induction of new members of staff include a strong focus on the school as a church school. Links with the Diocese, and a strong, supportive and collaborative team across both schools enable planned professional development and opportunities to develop in middle leadership. This strong capacity for growth is also enabling support to be given to another local church school. Governors are eager to support the school in its vision and strengthen the Christian character of the school even further. The strong Christian character gives rise to supportive and effective relationships with parents, built around a caring family ethos. Parental feedback is positive and parents are very supportive of the cohesive leadership. The links with the local community are commendable particularly as it is subdivided by a dual carriageway and belongs to two boroughs. More opportunities could now be seized to advance the pupils' spiritual development, by seeking ways for them to take the school's Christian distinctiveness out into the community, thereby extending the depth of their experience and further develop community and church links.

SIAMS report February 2016 Knowl Hill CE Academy, Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG10 9UX