



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

**St Andrew's Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Tower Hill,
Much Hadham,
SG10 6DL**

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 12 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 22 June 2010

School's unique reference number: 117444

Head teacher: Judy King

Inspector's name and number: Mel Adams NS 58

School context

The school is an average sized one form entry primary school with a nursery. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and live in the village or surrounding area. The number for whom the school is entitled to additional funding known as pupil premium and also those with special educational needs is below average. Since the last inspection changes to leadership include a new headteacher and deputy headteacher and a new rector.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrews Primary School as a Church of England school are **outstanding**

- The governing body has a clear understanding of the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school, and through knowing its strengths and areas for development is able to support and challenge school leaders to maintain the drive to develop its Christian character.
- The headteacher has built on the previous success of the school and further developed the Christian vision and values which are evident throughout the school and across the curriculum.
- The partnership between the church and the school, including the strong contribution of the rector to the ongoing development of the Christian distinctiveness, is supporting the day to day learning of children and those who work in the school.

Areas to improve

- Develop children's understanding of the Christian Church by exploring its cultural diversity within Britain and throughout the world.
- Deepen children's understanding of different faiths by visiting a variety of places of worship

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

Judged outstanding at the previous inspection, the school has continued to develop its distinctiveness and effectiveness through a deep commitment to the Christian values which are evident in daily worship and throughout the curriculum. Through staff and children actively using these values such as love and forgiveness, relationships at all levels throughout the school result in excellent behaviour. The rector speaks of how Gospel values ensure equality for each child steered by love of God and love of neighbour. These motivate school leaders in setting high expectations for attendance and achievement, both of which continue to be good and there are no exclusions. Parents are greatly appreciative of the impact on their children. One parent described how the understanding of faith 'feeds them'. In a setting which encourages generosity of spirit this was illustrated by a young child who, moved by hearing about the work of a charity, wanted then to donate their pocket money. The school ethos fosters in children an independence and responsibility for their learning and behaviour and as they move through the school children are beginning to discuss and evaluate their understanding of the Christian faith and other faiths. They enjoy their visits to St Andrew's church and express how they would like to visit other places of worship to help them develop understanding of different faiths. They do not yet have a clear understanding of the Christian church being multi-cultural and world-wide. Children appreciate how collective worship enables them to have personal time for prayer or for some, time to think and reflect. The shared and practised values are described by children as important for day to day living whatever their faith and they also see them as applicable to those of no faith. As a result, spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development is strong. Children enjoy learning in RE which challenges their thinking and enriches their religious understanding. One child was able to describe eloquently how their RE lessons enable children to think things through for themselves and make up our own minds.

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

Daily worship is a dynamic part of the school day, providing a setting in which all members of the school community participate. One governor described how they 'never fail to be affected by the worship and always go away with something'. Children describe how the setting for worship with the cross and candles helps them to reflect on Christian values from the Bible which they see as 'values for life'. The impetus of gathering, engaging, responding and sending is clearly experienced by all those participating. Inclusivity is evident through this, and children describe how worship enables all children to participate and how because of this they respect each other 'whether you are religious or not'. Prayer is a vital ingredient in providing opportunity for spiritual development, giving opportunity to be still, having a sense of God and the awe and wonder of the natural world. They are highly aware of how values such as forgiveness and respect inspired by the Bible stories they hear in collective worship, can be adopted and make a difference in their day to day relationships and support them in their attitudes to learning. Praying in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, visually supported by lighting 3 candles, gives children a good understanding of the Holy Trinity. The depth of understanding has been demonstrated by children preparing a presentation delivered during collective worship. Through effective planning which includes key aspects of the church calendar and the weekly gospel readings, along with regular visits to St. Andrews church, children have a good understanding of Anglican worship and practice. The rector and headteacher meet regularly to plan worship which they both lead and other members of staff are increasingly leading. The rector is well known in the school and in leading worship uses innovative approaches such as the teddy bear who is a visual reminder of the colours of the church seasons. The school does not have visitors from other churches and denominations. The views of staff and governors through discussions and of parents as demonstrated in a recent survey provide evaluation of the impact of daily worship. One parent commented on their appreciation of the way 'the ethos echoes the moral code we are hoping to instil in our children'. Children of all ages participate well in all aspects of worship, acknowledging with respect the importance of prayer, quietness for thinking, and singing beautifully. A worship team of older children meet regularly with the rector to evaluate, plan and deliver acts of worship, using their own ideas and insights. They were able to describe how what they learn in RE supports their understanding of the Bible and the life and ministry of Jesus.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious Education is an important priority as evidenced by the recent silver award of the RE quality mark. Attainment is at least in line with that of other subjects in the school and also with national expectations, with a growing number attaining above this. Children have a strong understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. As they move through the school they demonstrate increasing ability to research and evaluate, finding out about religious faith and practice, comparing and contrasting different faiths. This begins with the youngest children who in nursery learn about how the church and mosque are special places. Children are encouraged to use innovative and creative approaches to explain and present their understanding such as puppet making, story-telling and role play. Observed during the inspection, using these approaches gave children ownership of their learning and provided opportunity for them to think about the meaning and purpose of Buddhist Jataka stories. Creative recording in class SMSC books and individual RE books indicates good levels of understanding. This is very strong where learning tasks are well supported with clear learning objectives, such as the year 2 child who was able to draw and write about the nature of God, showing a high level of understanding. Increasingly, recorded work is assessed in line with school practice in other subjects, and where teachers have provided effective written feedback and children are given chance to respond, learning is reinforced. Visits have been made to St Pauls and St Albans cathedral and children spoke with appreciation of how these helped them to experience what they had been learning in the classroom. Such visits are not a systematic feature of the RE scheme. RE progress is recorded and tracked against the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, providing leaders with a clear overview of the standards. The leadership of the headteacher is strong, providing clear support and challenge through setting high expectations.

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

Governors describe their commitment to maintaining and developing the outstanding distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school evidenced not least by their high expectations in their appointment of a headteacher who would not only maintain, but build on this success. Described by one governor as 'living and breathing love and Christian values', the headteacher has developed all aspects of the school as a church school, where all members of the school community not only understand these values, but practise them in their day to day lives. Acting on the recommendations of the previous report, collective worship is regularly reviewed, and discussed both within the school and at governing body committee meetings. Leaders are very clear in their vision for Christian values to be experienced throughout the school community at the same time as ensuring that they are inclusive for those who may be of other faiths or with no faith. Christian care for all members of the school community means the headteacher works to strengthen the leadership skills of staff, for example by involving them in the leadership of collective worship. The same motivation ensures that self-evaluation is accurate enabling leaders to have a thorough understanding of strengths on which to build and areas to develop. As part of this process pupils' progress is carefully tracked so that leaders and governors are able to ensure appropriate strategies for continuing learning support are in place. Full discussion at governing body committees indicates that they are strategic in shaping developments, for example in the wording and content of the religious education policy. There is a clear understanding of the importance of SMSC development which is strong and informs learning throughout the school and across the curriculum. The highly effective partnership between the school and the church, and in particular, the regular participation by the rector in planning and leading of worship, ensures that the distinctiveness and effectiveness of the school as a church school continues to develop. RE and collective worship are a high priority in the school and school leaders have been well supported in their professional development by the diocese. The headteacher as both RE and collective worship leader is providing strong leadership and more recently is developing leadership throughout the staff, ensuring the sustainability of leadership within the school.

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