



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Northaw Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Vineyards Road, Northaw, Potters Bar EN6 4PB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 30 March 2015

Date of last inspection: November 2009

School's unique reference number: 117569

Headteacher: Alis Rocca

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

Northaw is a small rural primary school with close links to its parish church of St Thomas a Becket. It serves the children and families from the village and the surrounding towns of Cuffley and Potters Bar. There are 115 pupils on roll, who are mainly from a White British background. In the last eighteen months, there have been changes in staffing and amongst the governing body. The headteacher and the parish priest have taken up their posts since the last inspection.

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

- The Christian vision and dedication is shared by the headteacher and parish priest, who are instrumental in the life of this school. This is valued by everyone and ensures the Christian character of the school permeates all school life.
- Each individual child is taught to be an independent learner and is equipped with skills for life, based on the school's Christian values and the school's 6 Rs.
- The nurturing and inclusive environment in this welcoming and worshipping community is supportive of all, regardless of faith background.
- Strong leadership and good governance is rooted in the mutual and substantial partnership between church and school.

Areas to improve

- Ensure pupils develop a good understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith and enable them to encounter people of other faiths to enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [SMSC]. This includes learning about the saints and what it means to be part of the Anglican family outside their own local community.
- Review and embed the assessment of religious education [RE] so that it is used to inform planning and teaching, which in turn raises the standards of pupils' attainment.

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

Northaw provides a very exciting and inspirational learning environment where 'tiny acorns grow into mighty oaks'. The 6 Rs of responsibility, resilience, resourcefulness, respect, reflection and reasoning are linked to Biblical values and teaching and underpin all school life, which everyone can explain. This school lives out its mission to teach, model and live by Christian values, which include wisdom, hope, forgiveness and justice, thus making a positive difference to the lives of children. Relationships are excellent because all members of this inclusive community continually and consistently demonstrate the 6 Rs. The school provides a reservoir of success for pupils to draw upon, and they are encouraged to show resilience and have a go. As a result, all pupils thrive in the Christian culture and ethos which the school creates where pupils are positively encouraged to think, question and lead. Consequently, all pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. There have been no exclusions and attendance is very good. This is because Northaw includes and nurtures all children of all backgrounds, abilities and interests, including those who may need extra support and help. These children find the presence of Millie the school dog a calming influence, enabling them to succeed in their academic work. This supportive process results in children making very good progress. All staff regard every single child as their responsibility. Consequently, vulnerable groups are doing very well and progress is very good, even for low attainers. Rigorous assessment is in place to ensure this is sustained. As a result, Key Stage 1 pupils are above the national average in reading and writing with some Key Stage 2 pupils achieving Level 5 or 6, well above the national average. Dedicated teachers going the extra mile enable all pupils to succeed in their learning in a Christian culture of praise, and encouragement to persevere. Links with parents are very important, with the family support worker taking time to talk with parents and work with outside agencies to benefit each individual child. Pupils say they enjoy using the outdoor reflection area, which reminds them of the school's Christian values to reflect and pray enshrined in stone. Consequently, they often ask key questions there, such as, 'What is God like?' and 'Why does God allow bad things to happen'. This demonstrates how the school environment supports pupils' SMSC development very well. Pupils show great respect for diverse cultures and beliefs through RE and worship, which make a strong contribution to the school's Christian character and to pupils' personal development. However, this is based on limited experience of religious and cultural diversity at present.

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

Inspiring and engaging worship is deeply embedded in daily school life. Consequently, pupils and adults alike, including parents, derive meaningful and Biblical principles for life from the high quality experience offered. Worship takes place every Monday in St Thomas a Becket Church, involving the children and is well attended by parents and members of the parish community. Parents say, 'church services are always rewarding'. Half termly Eucharists are an important part of the worshipping life of this community where every part of the thanksgiving celebration is explained and explored in an exemplary way at the children's level. Excellent examples include the recent appointment of children as chalice administrators by the Bishop of St Albans. Children explain their special job of 'giving people wine' as enabling them to feel responsible. In addition, they lead the call and response part of the liturgy, asking such questions as 'Why is it right to give thanks and praise?' and 'How do we follow Jesus Christ?' Consequently, children are enabled to understand different levels of symbolism and belief, including The Holy Trinity. Pupils are able to explain why the candle has three wicks and express God as 'the Father who created the world and us. He created Jesus to spread the word about him. The Son is called Jesus, he sacrificed himself for us. The Holy Spirit is inside us. He is the spirit of Jesus. You can't see him or touch him'. Worship is carefully planned and resourced, with the headteacher and vicar working closely together. Key Stage 2 pupils are regularly timetabled to lead worship, which they enjoy and has a real community feel. They comment on how the 6 Rs 'help us get in the zone and prepare us for the rest of the week'. In addition, pupils learn from Bible stories such as David and Goliath, saying, 'if you believe in God, anything can happen'. Prayer features strongly in the life of this school, which pupils willingly contribute to in writing and reading their prayers. Pupils say that the Bible quotes around the school 'help me to be stronger'. Pupil evaluation of worship is captured in each class Reflection Book. Post it notes are used very effectively to capture pupils' thoughts and reflections which are shared with staff and governors. This ensures the integrity and development of worship significantly improve the worshipping life of the school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

RE enjoys a high profile at Northaw and is valued by its pupils. The good quality of the headteacher's leadership of RE ensures teaching and learning are consistently of a high standard, and are in line with other core subjects. Year 1 and 2 pupils are encouraged to go deeper and explore key questions such as, 'Why do Christians celebrate Easter?' Year 6 pupils are encouraged to be creative in designing symbols to represent religious ideas. Good examples include ideas to portray the path of difficulty in life to obtain peace. Consequently, pupils achieve very well, with Key Stage 1 on track to achieve age related expectations and Key Stage 2 pupils on track to achieve above age related expectations. Tracking and assessment takes place termly after each RE Week when work is moderated and shared with all governors. Pupils are aware of their targets and know how to improve in their work, using steps to success, saying that using the 6 Rs helps them to be reflective, resourceful and resilient. Teachers positively encourage pupils to peer assess and see if the person next to them is meeting their learning objectives. However, the school acknowledges that reviewing the assessment of RE, using the new syllabus and units of work, requires time to become more securely embedded. This has been identified as part of an on-going review of curriculum assessment. Pupils show good understanding of their study of Judaism and Islam, acknowledging they learn more when they have first-hand experiences visiting places of worship. This is recognised by the school. Pupils can relate the Christian narrative well. For example, they are able to explain the Incarnation, the Ascension and Pentecost in their own words. They enjoy discussing big questions, capturing their thoughts and reflections well in RE big books. Good examples include, 'Why do people have to sacrifice their life for others?' and 'How do other people celebrate?' which they say they had to think about a lot. However, whilst pupils have learnt about some saints such as St Peter and St Paul, children and adults alike welcome learning more about St Alban and St Thomas a Becket, to enhance their understanding of their local community as part of the Anglican communion and support their SMSC development.

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

Parents publicly proclaim that Northaw's headteacher, vicar and governors all work in an exemplary partnership together and 'believe in what they do', where pupil well-being is a priority. They go on to speak highly of the staff, saying the school's huge strength is that every child is treated as an individual, teaching their children to be 'independent learners, even when they are small'. They especially praise the headteacher, who 'leads from the front, with her own very strong faith permeating the school'. In addition, the presence of the vicar is integral to the life and governance of this school as the link governor for worship and RE. Together, they provide a seamless 'tour de force' which is seen to be instrumental in how the school's Christian vision and values are lived out. Parents testify to the impact of the consistent focus on the 6Rs and how they see the church as an extension of the classroom. Consequently, RE and collective worship, which are well led, managed and resourced by the headteacher with passion and enthusiasm, more than meet statutory requirements and both have a high status. The school values support from the diocese. Very good examples include the headteacher attending diocesan training on RE mastery in the curriculum, which transformed the way the school explored the meaning of resurrection on different levels. In addition, the school and church together run a baptism class and support the local foodbank. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with church, school and village working closely together. Excellent examples include Veterans Day, with everyone taking part in commemorations on Remembrance Sunday. Following the church service, refreshments and a display of work were held in school, allowing children and adults to share their stories. Areas from the last inspection have been addressed, with clear priorities identified for future action. Governors plan for, and monitor the development of the school's Christian ethos, ensuring that Christian principles and practice underpin everything, from pupil learning and achievement to health and safety. Consequently, their robust, regular and rigorous self-evaluation continually and consistently informs the school's high academic performance and the excellent SMSC development of pupils. Governors support staff and governor training in preparation for future leadership of church schools. This includes those new in post, who have benefitted from diocesan training. Thus, everyone works together as a team at Northaw.