



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### **Offley Endowed Voluntary Aided Primary School**

School Lane, Offley, Hitchin SG5 3AT

**Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory**

**Current inspection grade: Outstanding**

**Diocese: St Albans**

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 26 February 2015

Date of last inspection: January 2011

School's unique reference number: 117445

Headteacher: Anne Peck

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby 137

#### **School context**

Offley Endowed School is a small school with 114 children on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, those with special educational needs and/or at school action and those entitled to free school meals are below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus is above average.

#### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Offley Endowed as a Church of England School are outstanding.**

- The vision, drive and inspiration of the head and senior leaders is creating the best learning opportunities for all children within a Christian learning environment.
- Governors and staff are committed to realising and sharing a vision fully underpinned by the distinctive Christian character.
- Collective worship and links with church have a positive impact on the spiritual development of children.

#### **Areas to improve**

- Ensure that the theological background to the deeply embedded Christian values that underpin the school is fully understood by everyone.

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

The school has an obvious and distinctive Christian ethos that reflects love, care and faith in action. The mission statement 'Be all you can be' is central to daily life. Six key Christian values ensure that this impacts on every aspect of practice and policy. Although these are recognised as being distinctly Christian, this is insufficiently acknowledged in displays. The involvement of the school as a 'rights respecting school' makes clear links between the rights of children and Christian values. These securely underpin the well-established 'behaviour for learning' initiative that creates exemplary behaviour at all times. Children are very aware of the church school ethos that means 'we treat each other as we would wish to be treated'. Relationships are also excellent with everyone aware of the value of forgiveness in maintaining these. Children are confident, polite and respectful, commenting that in their small school 'everyone knows each other so no one puts anyone else down'. Adults in school recognise their responsibility to provide safe, enjoyable and challenging learning opportunities that enable each individual to achieve their potential. As a consequence children recognise the need for respect, positive attitudes and want to do their best for their teachers. Teaching is judged to be at least good, with increasing examples of outstanding elements. This results in children making good or better progress to achieve standards that are currently in line with national expectations. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is a strength of the school with cross-curricular links identified in lesson planning. These are further developed, by the impact of the school ethos, effective use of outdoor learning opportunities and visits, including the O2 Young Voices project. The impact of the ethos of the school promotes a deep sense of spirituality. Religious education (RE) is a high profile subject valued by all in school to promote respect and tolerance. Interactive displays, such as 'What I would ask God' encourage reflection and the use of higher level thinking skills. Children understand the global nature of Christianity and other world faiths. They recognise that 'different faiths view God in different ways but we need to respect everyone and accept their belief to be able to get on'.

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

Collective worship is a key part of the day, to share and explore Christian values, the Bible and the impact of these on daily life. It is central as a time for all to meet together and reflect. An effective policy reflects the Anglican tradition and the inclusive nature of worship that provides opportunities for open discussion and opportunities for all to share their own belief. The headteacher and vicar plan half-termly worship themes using the diocesan lectionary. Children have the opportunity to be part of the worship group, with different class representatives each term. They contribute ideas for worship from Christian values, RE and other curricular areas. They are involved in the organisation and delivery of worship, including the opening and closing of worship. This supports children's confidence in speaking and in their own belief. There is often a church presence in school with the vicar, lay reader or church member to reinforce the Christian character of the school. Foundation governors regularly visit to monitor the impact of worship and this informs future planning. Children create a respectful atmosphere as they enter with an obvious sense of anticipation. They are engaged by the lively delivery of the leader and respond to their peers who share the greeting, prayers and role-play. The sharing of the peace illustrates the confidence and spiritual journey of many pupils. High quality and meaningful singing is a strength of the school. Children take a thought or reflection as they leave the hall and many sing to the leaving music. Children experience a range of leaders for worship and the input of Anglican and Baptist clergy gives a wider perspective of Christian worship. A range of formats give age appropriate opportunities to explore themes. The act of worship at the end of the week reinforces the ethos of the school, as children sing 'you shall go out with joy'. Prayer has a high profile as 'a special time to talk to God and share worries, ask for help or say thank you'. It is reinforced throughout the school with children's prayers on prayer plates and pebbles. The Trinity is well understood by children, who explain 'God the Father created the world, God the Son was Jesus on the earth and although you can't see the Holy Spirit, He guides people now as He did with the disciples'. The vicar reinforces the Trinity in his blessing. The church is used for festival services, including Ash Wednesday, as well as a teaching resource. The school also celebrates Rogation Sunday and 'beating the bounds' to recognise the extent of the parish. Although parents join for worship in church, the school is exploring greater involvement of parents in school worship, as well as extending the presence of school in church through displays of work.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding.**

Religious education (RE) is well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic leader. With the headteacher she has created a syllabus to meet the needs of the school from the locally agreed syllabus and diocesan guidelines. A well-established policy and two year rolling programme underpin teaching, reinforcing 'we believe RE is about subject knowledge, critical and evaluative thinking and personal spiritual development'. All staff receive updates and training from the subject leader, who has an in-depth knowledge of RE across the school. Although RE is taught by the subject leader, each term she joins the class teacher in a team teaching situation to ensure continuity and cross curricular links. Teaching is judged as being good with outstanding elements. Although often pupil achievement mirrors that in literacy, the school recognises that some pupils achieve better in RE because of the use of reflection and higher level thinking skills. The relationships between teachers and pupils create an enjoyable climate for learning. Children know what is expected of them because of shared learning objectives. A Year 4 class made effective use of their visit to St Alban's Cathedral to recount the story of St. Alban. They listened to the articulate contributions made before a hot seat activity that reflected the empathy and deep understanding of the events and characters. The mature use of vocabulary in differentiated and challenging tasks shows pupils' learning about and from religion. Children in early years made good use of family photographs to illustrate 'friendship'. This was extended with the use of a story book and puppets before the children responded to a range of directed activities and child initiated learning tasks that met early learning goals. Children's books are generally well presented, with learning objectives, differentiated creative tasks and examples of learning about and from religion. Children make good use of higher level thinking skills and knowledge when challenged to compare the similarities and differences between major faiths. Children respond to the marking comments and challenges from teachers to extend their knowledge. The school makes good use of visits to other places of worship, including Westminster Abbey, St. Albans Cathedral and a local Hindu Temple. Termly RE days provide wider opportunities to explore RE, such as the importance of food in religious festivals. Staff also make effective use of RE links in other activities. For example, during a 'Languages week' there were displays of Jewish and Islamic vocabulary.

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

An inspirational headteacher, with a vision, 'to give every child the best possible education within a Christian learning environment', leads the school. Her passionate drive, shared by staff and governors, has enabled the school to fully realise its distinctive Christian character through the efforts of 'Team Offley'. The whole school community, including children, are involved in overt discussion of Christian values and have a secure understanding of their place and impact within the school. Well-informed governors have high expectations and provide challenge. Staff have the same expectations of children to maintain standards of achievement. The development points from the previous inspection have been securely addressed and taken to the next level. Foundation governors carry out their roles very effectively to maintain the profiles of RE and worship and ensure that all decision-making is informed by Christian values. An annual five-stage cycle of review and development, shared with all staff and governors, informs strategic planning. This includes discussion between the headteacher and foundation governors relating to evaluation of the distinctive Christian character of the school. Staff recognise that the leaders of the school value them. Staff also value their trust and compassion. Their strengths are identified and developed as part of professional development. The leadership qualities of the headteacher are currently recognised as she is currently supporting another local school. This also gives opportunities for staff to experience leadership roles. Parents are adamant about the impact of Christian values on the personal and academic development of all children, commenting 'values of the school are constantly communicated in a variety of ways. Children talk about Christian values and their learning when they are at home'. Parents recognise the 'open door' policy of the school and the calmness and tolerance that pervades the school. The impact of the school on parents, children and wider community is clearly expressed in the comment 'this school gets into your heart'. The active 'Offley School Association' supports through fundraising events that allow for the whole local community to come together, for example to support the school singing for charity. The school has beneficial links with the local small schools' network and the diocese. The Salusbury and Burroughs Trust and church support the work of the school and are, for example, involved in the planning of a new extension.