



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane
Mill End
Rickmansworth
WD3 8HD

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 28 April 2015

Date of last inspection: March 2010

School's unique reference number: 117448

Headteacher: Philippa Golding

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby 137

School context

St Peter's is an averaged sized primary school with most pupils from a White British heritage. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to pupil premium.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter's as a Church of England school are good

- The implementation of *Christian Values for Schools* by the senior leadership team has made a significant impact on the vision, unity and inclusivity of the school.
- The contributions of Christian values and opportunities for developing higher level thinking skills enable children to relate these values to life and learning, resulting in significant impact the academic and spiritual lives of adults and children.
- The broad, inclusive curriculum, Christian learning environment and links to worship enhance the quality of spiritual moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

Areas to improve

- Extend the spiritual journey of pupils by providing greater opportunities to plan, lead and evaluate acts of class worship.
- Formalise evaluations of the school ethos and worship, involving adults and children, to inform future developments
- Audit the training needs of staff to further develop their confidence and religious education (RE) knowledge to enhance the current good teaching in RE.

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

Christian values at the heart of the welcoming and inclusive ethos create a distinctive Christian learning environment. Christian love, care and respect drive every aspect of school life, fully reflecting the school motto 'learning together for life'. The links between learning and Christianity are explained in the St. Peter's acrostic. Everyone is valued as a unique individual with his or her own needs and talents. Christian values underpin a positive learning environment that enables all to strive for success. The school ethos ensures excellent relationships and impeccable behaviour as well as positive attitudes to learning. Staff articulate Christian values in cross-curricular teaching. Reflective thinking and open discussion with adults enable children to engage with abstract concepts and articulate the distinctive Christian character of the school. These also enhance the decision-making skills of children. Exploring each individual value, its biblical background and relevance to life today enable children to confidently explore 'big questions' such as 'is being clever the same as being wise?' They recognise the inclusivity of the school, explaining that the teaching of Jesus about respect means that 'you treat other people as you would wish to be treated'. The high profile of mutual respect creates a successful learning environment. Children enjoy lessons because 'teachers find a way to make them interesting. They set the right levels of work to challenge each of us'. This results in achievement and progress that are well above national averages. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is successfully promoted through a rich curriculum, a range of displays and the effective use of the outdoor facilities. RE is a high profile subject area making a major impact on the life of the school. Pupils have an awareness of stewardship of God's creation through care for the school poultry and gardening opportunities. A creative approach to religious education, including 'Sacred heart' paintings and the 'Culture of Carnival', gives pupils a good understanding of Jesus in other cultures and the extent of global Christianity. Visits to non-Christian places of worship enhance knowledge of other major faiths. Pupils readily explain that 'we respect other faiths because although people have different religions, they share similar values.' Pupils show Christian values in action through fundraising. They also share empathy and compassion through opportunities to work with people with learning disabilities at a local day care centre.

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

The spiritual life of the school is reflected through the high profile and range of worship experiences. Collective worship themes are well planned with *Christian Values for Schools* and the diocesan liturgical calendar used as a basis for the monthly value. Themes give pupils a good understanding of the Bible, life of Jesus and the impact of Christian values on everyday life. Pupils recognise the sense of family in worship, learning about faith. Discussion and reflection give a deeper understanding of the foundations of values to create balanced individuals. Pupils experience and enjoy the range of formats for worship, including whole school, class, singing and celebration. Wednesday news worship explores world events often suggested by children. This enables pupils to pose the question 'What can we learn from this?' and understand that problem solving through faith takes values to a deeper level. Class worship enables age appropriate exploration of values and development of theological and philosophical ideas to further their own opinions. For example, they recognise the gift of wisdom from God to Solomon and make links to own lives, recognising the importance of making the right choice. Such opportunities promote their thinking skills as well as spiritual development. However, although pupils contribute prayers and readings in worship, they are not given the opportunities to consistently use their skills and knowledge to plan and deliver worship regularly. Younger children develop knowledge of Bible stories and through discussing the meanings of, for example, the wise and foolish builder begin to understand the importance of following correct rules. Weekly worship led by the vicar ensures pupils are aware of Anglican worship. This is reinforced by the use of liturgical colours and greeting 'God is here, we are here'. Pupils also experience other Anglican elements, such as the vicar robing when leading worship in church, celebrating Ash Wednesday and are developing a secure understanding of the Trinity. Children lead worship at the end of each value that brings together their ideas and responses. They also monitor each act of worship and share their findings in a newsletter. This is one of several informal evaluation procedures used to inform development. The school has identified the benefits of creating a working party to fully explore the ethos and worship of the school, as well as bringing together the informal

evaluations currently used. Prayer has a high profile in the daily life of the school, with leaders using an inclusive invitation to pray. Children recognise the value of prayer and make good use of a prayer tree and class reflection areas to 'pray or think'. Younger pupils also make use of a windmill 'to blow our worries away'. The school prayer was jointly created using contributions from each class. Year 6 pupils are currently working further the impact of the school prayer setting it to a melody.

The effectiveness of religious education is good.

A knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader effectively leads RE. She leads by example and a weekly half-day non-contact time gives opportunities to support colleagues through observation, scrutiny and assessment. This gives the subject a high profile and ensures that staff are developing the knowledge and confidence to teach successfully. A range of support and monitoring procedures ensures continuing development and extends philosophical thinking of adults as well as children. The leader has identified the need for another audit of staff knowledge and confidence to ensure continued development of the good practice of the school. The use of 'I can statements' shows that achievement is line with other curricular areas and pupils are making age expected progress or better. The leader is currently exploring assessments to ensure they prove a true picture and are effectively used to inform future planning, especially with introduction of a new curriculum. Shared work scrutiny with the literacy leader compares standards. A gifted and talented group of children has been identified and given opportunities to extend their knowledge further. Lessons are good because of teacher knowledge and effective questioning that includes opportunities for reflection and paired discussion. Teachers also share personal experiences to encourage deeper thinking and questioning. For example, a teacher used a picture of herself in Kenya to encourage children to discuss 'What would we ask God?' as an introduction to asking 'big questions'. Older children used a range of artefacts including bread, a candle and illustrations and their knowledge of the life of Jesus to explain Christian symbolism and relate it to Bible verses. Other faiths are compared with Christianity, for example, the celebrations of a Hindu and Christian wedding. Work in books is generally well presented, with differentiated activities and a good balance of learning about and learning from religion. Children know success criteria because of shared learning objectives and marking comments. Visits to non-Christian places of worship enhance learning. Interactive RE displays, such as 'Festivals of Light' and God described in a kenning, make cross-curricular links and develop thinking.

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

The enthusiastic headteacher and leadership team have a secure and well-established Christian vision 'to ensure that each child has the opportunity and knowledge to make informed moral and spiritual decisions for life'. This promotes a clear sense of identity, rights and responsibilities to God's creation regardless of faith background. Christian values impact on the practice and policy of the school. Although there have been changes on governing body, training sessions have given new governors the skills and knowledge to increasingly and effectively challenge and question the school. All are aware of the importance of Christian values, RE and worship informing the distinctive Christian character of the school and their decision-making. The development points from the previous inspection have been addressed. However, the changes in governance mean that some of these are insufficiently embedded. Everyone in school has a commitment to raising standards through effective teaching. Developments to the effectiveness as a church school are identified and discussed as part of the school development plan. Success criteria are identified and monitored. Informal discussions and visits, including learning walks and discussions inform foundation governors of the ethos of the school to support development. The involvement of foundation governors in the finance committee ensures value for money decisions and supports the profile of RE. This includes regular non-contact time for the subject leader to monitor and develop the subject. Staff ensure that Christian values underpin their teaching and the supportive and caring learning environment that promotes a moral understanding of other faiths. They share the pride of the head in working in the school, suggesting the 'buzz' of their working relationships as an example of the Christian value of koinonia. Parents recognise the impact of the school on their children's attitudes and abilities. Their trust in the school is expressed in the comment 'the teachers know all of

the children and their families so children are loved before they come to school'. They also recognise the inclusivity of the school and 'excellent pastoral support that treats everyone as a unique individual, especially during times of difficulty'. Parents also recognise the equal importance given to all faiths, as well as, for example, the teaching of Makaton, so that all can communicate. They are positive about the results of the holistic approach that enables them 'to see the confidence of our children grow because they trust the teachers'. The school enjoys good links with the diocese. Sharing good practice and training with St. Mary's, a nearby church school reinforces leadership opportunities. The path between school and St. Peter's Church symbolises the teaching and spiritual links between the two buildings.

SIAMS report April 2015 St Peter's VA Primary, Rickmansworth WD3 8HD