



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Mill Race, Stanstead Abbots, Ware SG12 8BZ

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 1 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 117407

Headteacher: Rosemary Woodall

Inspector's name and number: Chris Westgarth 44

School context

St Andrew's Church of England serves the village of Stanstead Abbots and the surrounding area. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average. The school runs its own breakfast club and is involved in the Achievement for All Programme.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The vision, inspiration and drive of the headteacher and senior leaders creates the best opportunities for all children within a Christian learning environment
- The exemplary behaviour of the pupils is underpinned by a clear set of Christian values which the pupils all know and understand well
- Teaching about Christianity in collective worship and religious education (RE) makes a significant impact on the Christian character of the school and results in mature spiritual, moral and social understanding of issues in the daily lives of pupils

Areas to improve

- Enable all pupils to contribute to the evaluation of worship in all its contexts to maximise their engagement and the continuing positive impact of worship throughout the school community
- Develop the outside area and establish ways in which it is used to enhance pupils' spiritual development

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

There is strong and robust evidence of Christian values and the Christian character being embedded in the life of the school. Pupil groups work well and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong across all key stages. Relationships at all levels are inclusive and grounded in Christian values. This is reinforced by the school motto *'Learn to love and love to learn; in God's love each one will shine. As a result all pupils are valued and loved, therefore they are in a good place to learn and self-esteem is high.* This makes St Andrew's an inclusive school and pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress because they are valued as unique individuals. Standards are predicted to rise in 2015. Religious education (RE) is a high profile subject, valued by all. Recent training in RE is having positive benefits and interactive displays, such as *'Where is God?'* encourage reflection and the use of higher level thinking skills. Responding to the school motto pupils are well motivated, have positive attitudes, and speak with pride and enthusiasm about their school, their teachers and their learning. Friendships are strong. Pupils readily talk about worship and God, they are deep thinkers and they enjoy the opportunity to question and respond in worship. Pupils have a good awareness of their school as a Christian school. Learning about Christianity as a world faith encourages a strong commitment to charitable giving and a desire to help those in need locally, nationally and internationally. For example, there are plans to hold a 'Lollipop' fundraising day for the Isobel Hospice in memory of much loved 'Lollipop Pete' who passed away during the Easter holidays. Links with the twinned schools in France, Plaistow and The Gambia, ensure that community cohesion is strong along with spiritual and cultural development. The recent visit from the Gambian headteacher has had a profound influence on charitable giving and pupils were able to talk about the generous gifts received and link it to the Bible parable about the widow's mite. Several initiatives reinforce the Christian values programme and behaviour strategies including the *'Values Tea Party'* and *'Top Table Dining'*. Pupils are encouraged to own their own behaviour and take responsibility for their actions. As a result behaviour is exemplary and pupils are kind, caring and polite. Their understanding of right and wrong and forgiveness is strong, often linking forgiveness with Bible passages and Jesus forgiving others. Links with the church are very strong and pupils benefit from 'St Andrew's Buddies', students from All Nations Christian College who spend time in school as part of their placement at St Andrew's church. This link strengthens the understanding of Christians 'going out' to serve and teach in other countries. The outdoor area in the early years setting is delightful and encourages a wide variety of reflection activities, linking with the Christian values. *'Coppings Corner'*, on the site of the old swimming pool, is also being developed to create an outdoor area for Christian reflection and learning. The eco group has created some prayer flags linking environmental themes and thanking God for his creation of the world. The extensive school grounds are well cared for and reinforce this care of God's creation. There are many benches, trees, plants and pathways and Governors and the Church School Aspects group are discussing ways in which this could be developed as a well-defined reflective trail. Rev Glyn offers staff and parents compassionate listening and support at his drop in sessions. Pupils felt that as parents and staff had this opportunity they should be given the same; as a result Rev Glyn is available to pupils as a listening ear. This is emerging as a beneficial pastoral role within the school.

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

Excellent leadership has not only kept worship at the centre of school life but has brought about improvement. Pupils create a respectful atmosphere as they enter with an obvious sense of anticipation. High quality and meaningful singing is a strength of the school. Worship is well planned, evaluated and monitored. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate worship, although this is not yet fully embedded across all levels. Foundation governors regularly visit the school to monitor the impact of worship and this informs future planning of themes and delivery of worship. Pupils are well used to the gathering, engaging, responding and sending out format used in collective worship. The worship observed was lively, inclusive and pupil participation was high. It concluded with a worship song and spontaneous pupil led prayers on the theme of thankfulness. Pupils understand the importance of prayer and readily engage in prayer – writing their own prayers that are used in classrooms or praying openly in worship times. They know the Lord's Prayer and their own words version of it illustrates a good level of understanding. Therefore, prayer has a high profile as a special time to talk to God and share concerns, say thank you or ask for help. Pupils talk confidently about the person of Jesus and of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This

strengthens the understanding of Christian beliefs about God and as a result pupils are able to describe the Trinity in their own words as shown on their Mobius strips – *God as Holy Spirit means to me that He is always with me in my heart. God as Son (aka Jesus) means to me that He forgives me and died on the cross to forgive my sins. God as Father means to me that he protects and watches over me.* Themes and ideas for collective worship are planned termly with input from the 'Faith Factory', a group of pupils, who have a particular interest in collective worship. They often choose to meet voluntarily at lunchtimes to plan worship times, supporting the current value by using drama or leading prayer. Bible stories are used effectively in worship and this often stimulates meaningful discussions outside of worship times. Pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive about worship. As a result parents are keen to be involved and an open invitation has been extended for parents to attend worship. 'Faith Factory' was involved in creating the worship-singing group (choir), with some pupils from this group recently singing in a local competition. Pupils have an impressive knowledge of key Christian beliefs from the richness of what they experience in worship. This understanding is reinforced by special services held at St Andrew's Church.

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

The leadership of St Andrew's is highly effective because its Christian character directly informs the strategic vision and planning at all levels. The inspirational headteacher, whose vision is to 'give every child the best possible education within a Christian learning environment', has been instrumental in making sure that everyone is clear about what this means. As one pupil commented *'She's special, there's no-one quite like her...she always tries to sort out family situations...she's never in a bad mood.'* The head and deputy are passionate about Christian values, raising self-esteem and setting firm foundations based on Christian values, which enable pupils to fly with their learning and reach their full potential. The whole school community is involved in overt discussions of Christian values. Therefore, there is a secure understanding of the impact within the school and how those same values impact the wider world. The relationship with St Andrew's church is strong and the school is well respected in the community. The school is rooted in the community and the community plays an active part in the life of the school. The chair of governors leads well and as a result governors are well informed and have high expectations for the school. They provide rigorous and robust challenge and support, through their visits and monitoring. Foundation governors carry out their roles very effectively. The distinctive Christian character and the development of the school as a church school are standing items on governor agendas and at leadership meetings. This has resulted in staff and governors being able to articulate how it has benefited the school and pupils. Governors are informed of the work of the school through reports and visits. Each governor is linked to a curriculum area and through regular visits tracks the subject through the school. Governors know the strengths and areas for development of the school because of their visits. Links with the diocese are strong and training opportunities are having a positive influence. The headteacher and senior leadership team effectively oversee and evaluate the provision of RE and collective worship; evidence shows this has a strong impact on learners and staff. The Church School Aspects group - a group of parents, staff, governors and children (by invitation) - meets to discuss the Church school character and monitor the progress of the priority area in the school development plan. This creates a forum to ensure that this is always on everyone's agenda. The Christian ethos and values are shared with all new families joining the school. This ethos is evident the moment you enter the building; it is almost tangible. Senior leaders and governors know their school well; they regularly seek the views of parents, pupils and staff. These consultations fully inform the accurate self-assessment and this is a strength of the school. Parents recognise and appreciate the open door policy of the school. The impact of this and the school as a whole is clearly expressed in the comment *'I'm so proud of St Andrew's – you can't get a better school. I wish every child had the chance to experience a school like this. It's just like a big family, they are really here for us all!'* The Christian value of the half term is well communicated through newsletters and the headteacher's value's blog on the website. Parents speak positively about the impact of Christian values on the personal and academic development of all children. 92% of parents felt Christian values were very important for their child and 84% found the values a very useful point of discussion at home. One parent said *'We always know the 'value' as our children are always talking about it and 'living' it at home.'*