

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Leverstock Green Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Green Lane, Hemel Hempstead HP2 4SA

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 09 July 2014

Date of last inspection: 08 June 2009

School's unique reference number: 117416

Headteacher: Mrs Victoria Burgess

Inspector's name and number: Chris Westgarth 44

School context

Leverstock Green Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a slightly smaller than average primary school on the edge of Hemel Hempstead. The majority of pupils are of White British origin but the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is increasing. There is a mix of social backgrounds and the numbers of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average. Equally the proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is below average. The headteacher and vicar have been in post since 2012 and the chair of governors since 2013.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Leverstock Green as a Church of England school are outstanding.

The school has many robust strengths resulting from the powerfully distinctive Christian ethos seen in practice and policy and include: -

- The commitment, drive and vision of the headteacher, staff, vicar and governors to the continuing distinctive Christian character of the school and ensuring all pupils have the best support in their learning and personal development
- The Christian commitment to an inclusive school supports strong and secure relationships between all members of the school community
- The impact of Christian values on raising the academic and personal achievement of pupils

Areas to improve

Increase the focus on the Trinity - to enable pupils to express their understanding of what Christians believe about the nature of God

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

Christian values are at the very core of this school and underpin everything the school does. As a result Leverstock Green provides a rich curriculum, a strong Christian ethos and excellent links between religious education (RE) and collective worship. This enables outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. RE contributes very effectively to pupils' growing and deepening understanding of the Christian faith along with that of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism. As a result, their knowledge of other faiths is robust. Effective teaching of RE motivates pupils who appreciate the relevance of the subject to their lives. Consequently pupils are enthusiastic about learning and there are no withdrawals from RE. Bright, prominent displays together with quiet, I-spaces (reflective areas) in classrooms greatly enhance pupils' spiritual development as do the school grounds, which include a special place in the Nursery garden. Pupils comment that it is a special place because they can *come and be quiet, they can listen to the bells, they can talk to God*. They are proud of their special outdoor space, it's a place where they can stop and think. As one pupil put it, think about *'God, the world and stars*. Pupils especially value the walkway corridor where their brightly decorated stones, crosses and stained glass windows are displayed.

Community cohesion is well developed and charitable giving is strong with pupils keen to help those in need. Children readily engage and enjoy all aspects of learning. The mission statement, ~ 'Striving for excellence, caring for the individual', has been reviewed with staff, pupils and parents and carers and is now founded on Christian principles. School attendance is high and this is reinforced by the class attendance 'Ready to Learn' certificates.

The school's Christian ethos enables it to provide excellent pastoral support for all. As a result pupils are happy, feel valued, safe and enjoy learning. This has a significant impact on achievement, which is above national expectations.

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 this is often reflected in their questioning and responses during worship. Gifted and talented pupils worked on a collaborative art project with a local church secondary school. This resulted in the creation of a mural that represents the life of the school as an expression of the Christian character. Pupils throughout the school created artwork for the stations of the cross activities in Holy Week.

The school seeks to promote equality. Pupils from diverse backgrounds get on well with each other. Therefore, Leverstock Green is an inclusive learning and nurturing environment. The school is proud of being a 'Rights Respecting School' and all classes follow this code of conduct.

The RE enrichment week was used with great effect and the impact is ongoing. The creation of an activity to explain the meaning of Easter – *'Eastingles'* similar to a Christingle, is still being enthusiastically talked about and the construction of the large cross in the hall based on a pupil's design reinforces the cross curricular approach to learning. Plans for an outdoor reflective area for the whole school community have been delayed due to structural problems but the current year 6 RE Ambassadors are keen to return next year to see the progress.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school. It is well planned, monitored and evaluated by pupils, staff, governors and visitors. The headteacher and incumbent work well to ensure that high quality collective worship is delivered and has an impact on the life of the school. The RE ambassadors see their role as also including worship and created the Lent book with puzzles, pictures, texts and reflections to be used during Lent.

Through collective worship there is a growing understanding of key Christian doctrines, including the character of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The revised school prayer carefully weaves the Trinity into the prayer. However, not all pupils are confident about talking about the Trinity but the school is working hard to address this. Pupils have a good robust knowledge of Bible stories and key Christian festivals. Services in the church help the pupils to appreciate their church and Anglican practice further. Prayer is strong throughout the school and the inclusion of I-spaces (reflective areas) has helped reinforce this. Staff and pupils of all faith backgrounds are happy to be involved because they recognise the impact it makes on their personal lives. Consequently there are no withdrawals from Collective Worship. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in worship and they enjoy writing their own prayers, singing and performing drama activities. There is good involvement from outside groups, governors, staff and church members. Pupils know and understand the importance of the Lord's Prayer, readily talking about forgiveness and knowing right from wrong. The attitude of pupils to collective worship is good because the quality of worship offered to them is making a real difference in their lives, contributing greatly to their spiritual development. As a result prayerful and meaningful worship takes place, with a focus on Christian values and Jesus' teaching in the Bible. Such worship is valued by children, staff, parents and governors. As one pupil commented, *'I love worship because I can learn about Jesus and have a time to be quiet'*.

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

Leadership and management at all levels is strong and reflects the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils enjoy their many and varied roles; Change Team, RE Ambassadors, Sport Ambassadors and Office Angels. Foundation governors are very active in school, developing the ethos through formal and informal monitoring that includes parents and pupil questionnaires. They also lead worship. Effective 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. These experiences fully inform the accurate self-assessment. The high expectations for staff, underpinned by a programme of curriculum and personal development, diocesan training and visits to other schools are reflected in the good and improving achievement of pupils. This is reflected in the fact that pupils for whom the school receives additional funding are rapidly catching up with other pupils.

The RE leader has a clear understanding of the subject and how it links to the school ethos and filters into daily life, helping pupils with their relationships, their goals and their spirituality. The school's vision was developed in conjunction with the school and wider community. That vision is shared with all new families joining the school, and is evident the

moment you enter the building, it is almost tangible. The vision is demonstrated to visitors in the entrance area for which pupils take responsibility. Foundation governors help to maintain good church, school and diocesan links. Pupils are confident that their ideas and opinions are valued. They are proud of their achievements and they take their responsibilities seriously. The relatively new headteacher and vicar have a strong commitment to maintaining and developing the distinctive Christian character of the school. The school is on a journey; they know where they are going and which way they must follow.

SIAMS report July 2014 Leverstock Green CE (VC) Primary School HP2 4SA