



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
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The **Methodist Church**



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Furneux Pelham Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Furneux Pelham
Buntingford
SG9 0LH

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 09 October 2014

Date of last inspection: 10 July 2009

School's unique reference number: 117394

Headteacher: Mrs Brigid Dyson

Inspector's name and number: Miss Chris Westgarth No 44

School context

Furneux Pelham School is smaller than the averaged sized primary school with 134 pupils. The school enjoys a very good working relationship with the church, which is opposite. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds and the proportion of those with a special educational need or disability is below average. The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Furneux Pelham as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The dedication, drive and determination of the headteacher, staff and governors ensures the distinctive Christian character is sustained and enriched
- The Christian understanding of each child's worth ensures that all teachers have high expectations that result in outstanding academic achievement and behaviour
- The Christian values shared throughout the school create an atmosphere in which all pupils are nurtured and able to flourish as unique and valued individuals

Areas to improve

- Use pupils' enthusiasm for and engagement with collective worship to increase opportunities for all of them, in age appropriate ways, to plan, lead and evaluate in order to enrich their understanding of worship

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

There is a very real sense of care and respect, based on distinctively Christian values, which permeate the school's ethos and culture. From the moment you enter the building this is evident and all adults working in the school model this. This results in high quality behaviour, which supports outstanding learning. Through the nurturing and caring ethos, the school makes certain that this is a highly effective school which promotes pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and high academic achievement, which is above national expectations. There is high quality Religious Education (RE) and the introduction of whole class RE books captures the learning of RE and provides a good reference point for learners. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective teaching motivates pupils who appreciate the relevance of the subject to their lives. Pupils understand that part of RE is learning about other faiths '*so we know what other people believe*'. Pupils have a good awareness of their school as a Christian school and of Christianity being a world faith. Charitable giving is strong and there is a desire to help those in need locally, nationally and internationally. Children enjoy school and learning; this is very evident through the vibrant displays and classroom workbooks. This further enhances the development of SMSC values across the curriculum. When asked about what they liked about Furneux Pelham school one pupil commented that '*we can learn and it's exciting and interesting*'. As a result pupils want to learn and '*don't want to miss anything*'; therefore attendance is high. Behaviour observed around school and in the playground was outstanding. There is a real family feel with older pupils caring for younger ones. Children feel safe - they know right from wrong and are able to explain the importance of forgiveness for Christians'. Parents comment that the Christian character of the school empowers pupils on their journey forward. 94% of parents surveyed feel that the school has a distinctive Christian ethos and 96% say it promotes Christian attitudes and values. Pupil questionnaires show that 97% believe the school teaches them a lot about Christianity and Christian values. Furneux Pelham is an inclusive school and pupils make excellent progress because of the rich curriculum and extra curricular events, including breakfast, chess and running club. The school grounds are delightful and well cared for. When a much-loved tree needed to be felled the wood was used to make a bug hotel and the stump was left in situ to remember the tree and as an additional place to sit. Therefore, what was a sad event has had a positive outcome and this is true in so many other aspects of school life.

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

Outstanding collective worship is at the heart of school life and all staff and pupils participate with enthusiasm. The daily act of worship enhances the pupil's knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith including a good understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A year 3 pupil has explained this understanding as '*it shows that God is all these things but they are all different.*' And as another pupil commented '*3 different bits making one.*' Artwork has been used effectively to illustrate the trinity, so that younger pupils are able to see the representation clearly. The attitude of the pupils to collective worship is excellent because the inspirational and creative experiences offered to them in worship are making a real difference in their lives and the lives of their families. Children have a strong understanding of Anglican practice developed through links with the church and the input of local clergy. Colours of the church year are talked about and pupils have a good understanding of this. A local carpenter has crafted a beautiful but simple wooden cross. This has been made using walnut wood, which was special to the founder of the Mary Wheatley Trust, which owns the school grounds. Pupils talk enthusiastically of their involvement in this project and the importance of the cross. Each class working with local artists has produced stunning Christian banners, which are displayed in the hall as a focus for worship. A simple song is sung for the lighting and extinguishing of the candle on the worship table. This focuses on Jesus as light of the world and that He takes care of us as we go home.

Additional special worship activities further enhance spiritual development. An example is *The Christmas experience* in the church; this incorporated the retelling of the Christmas events in a creative way. The school followed this by creating their own event for Easter -*Following in the footsteps of Jesus*; this has had a profound effect on the lives of pupils, staff and governors. As a result there is a greater understanding of the events leading up to Easter and the resurrection. These interesting and inspiring times deepen the understanding of Christianity for learners. Prayer permeates the life of the school and pupils value the opportunity pray, reflect and have a moment of quiet. Grace is said in classrooms before lunch and the whole school prayer and the Lord's prayer is well known. Each class has a reflection area and this is enriching pupil's spiritual development and enables them to reflect on the value of the half term and write their own prayers. In the collective worship observed there were good levels of pupil participation. The focus on friendships was linked with the Bible passage of running the race and not giving up just because things get difficult and not giving up on friendship just because we disagree. Year 6 pupils carry out evaluation of collective worship. After each collective worship they choose, at random, several pupils to ask what have they learnt from collective worship and what could be done better. The senior leadership team reviews these findings, to ensure that collective worship continues to be high quality and inspiring. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to plan, lead and evaluate Pelham Praise. This is a special collective worship time, which takes place in school. Governors, staff and parents attend Pelham Praise and other worship times and comment on the impact on their lives.

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

The headteacher and leadership team consistently promote a clear, exemplary vision for the school, which is rooted in distinctively Christian values. The areas of development from the last inspection have not only been addressed but are fully embedded in the life of the school. Parents have a strong relationship with the school. They recognise the Christian character of the school and comment that it reinforces Christian values at home. Governors know their school well; they visit and monitor regularly. The distinctive Christian character and the development of the school as a church school are a standing item 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. Involvement in leadership by pupils is strong with groups including the eco committee and school council. Pupils are invited to attend a governors meeting to report on their work. This is having a positive benefit for pupils and governors. The school is a '*reaching out*' school and along with the church is at the heart of the community. It is held in high esteem by the whole community and is very actively involved with the church and the village. As a result there are solid partnerships between the school, parents, church, and the community it serves.

Links with the diocese are strong and training opportunities are having a positive influence. The Church is in interregnum and the foundation governor has just moved. This obviously poses a challenge and the school is keen to see new foundation governors appointed. However the links with the church are strong and systems are in place to ensure that the partnership remains so during this period. Parents comment '*The church is almost an extension to the school building*'. Through continued training senior leaders and governors are developing robust systems for effective succession planning.

The dynamic headteacher leads by example and was observed helping to serve lunches to alleviate the pressure the kitchen staff were under. This is a clear example of the ethos '*if there's a problem we all lend a hand*'. The headteacher and senior leadership team effectively oversee and evaluate the provision of RE and collective worship to ensure the impact on learners and staff.

SIAMS report October 2014. Furneux Pelham Church of England School, SG9 0LH