



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Tewin Cowper Church of England Aided Primary School

Cannons Meadow, Tewin, Welwyn AL6 0JU

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 11 November 2014

Date of last inspection: 7 & 9 September 2009

School's unique reference number: 117457

Headteacher: Alison Simpson

Inspector's name and number: Lilian Weatherley 42

School context

Tewin Cowper Church of England Aided Primary school is a small rural school in the Parish of St Peter's, Tewin and serving the village of Tewin, surrounding villages and parts of Welwyn Garden City.

There are currently 115 pupils on role, the majority being of white British heritage although the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups has slightly increased over the past two years. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or those who receive additional funding through the pupil premium is below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Tewin Cowper C of E Aided Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

- The new Christian values programme has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance
- Christian values and principles underpin the excellent relationships in the school community and have united all stakeholders to address the issues of the Ofsted report May 2013 and move forward together
- The excellent relationship with the incumbent and the close links with the Parish Church of St Peter's have had a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition.

Areas to improve

- To implement a new and rigorous assessment procedure for religious education to ensure that all pupils make sufficient progress in their learning
- To implement clear differentiation across the mixed age classes and key stages to ensure that all pupils make greater progress in their knowledge and understanding of religious ideas and concepts
- To reinstate opportunities for spiritual reflection and prayer across the curriculum to improve pupils' spiritual development
- Ensure that all stakeholders fully understand the new SIAMS framework so they are able to articulate the requirements to effect improvement.

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

The essence of the school's distinctive Christian character is visible through the personal interactions and family atmosphere that permeate the life of the school. Attainment is now above the national average and the recent problem with achievement in mathematics has been addressed. The pupils are a credit to their school and families. They are articulate and courteous to each other and adults, enjoying school and feeling safe and cared for. They are proud of their school. One pupil commented, 'I like the idea that we go to a church school and we go to church and have services'.

The Christian values programme was implemented in September and is linked to biblical teaching. This is already having a significant impact on pupil behaviour, achievement, attendance and lateness. Attendance has improved and the number of pupils arriving late has decreased. Pupils are eager to talk about the values studied and explain how they follow them through at home or in other settings. All members of the school community are made aware of the value of the week and use it to consolidate pupils' learning. For example, during the Remembrance Day service the incumbent talked to the pupils about respect and questioned them on how they and the community show respect for others.

The school has an active school council, which includes members of year R. The older members take care to ensure that the younger pupils have a voice and are looked after. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and planned into each curriculum area but opportunities for silence and spiritual reflection are currently hampered by the repair to the school roof. The school fosters a holistic view of the child and has implemented a wrap-around care programme to support this. Many pupils enjoy the before-school club and the range of extra-curricular activities it provides. The Friday Story Club, run by the incumbent, has helped to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of key Bible stories.

Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development, especially their understanding of diverse faiths and cultures. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school visit to the Hindu temple at Neasden and the Passover meal held in the church. Pupils regularly discuss items from the news and have a good understanding of world events and issues. They are encouraged to become global citizens. The Eco-Council works with parents ensures that the outdoor environment is a 'wonderful space for learning' and pupils show care for others less fortunate by regular fundraising including the Christmas shoebox appeal. One governor commented, 'We believe that the Christian values that are instilled at Tewin school give the children respect for their teachers, their fellow pupils, the community, people from different cultures and the environment in which they live. As governors we are proud to be associated with a school that produces such rounded characters with real potential to become future leaders.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

The school is meeting its statutory duty for collective worship, and prayer and worship are given a high profile. Each class leads a special service at the church during the year and pupils and parents spoke highly of the recent harvest festival services. The school is now using the Christian Values programme to underpin its worship and this is having a clear impact on the pupils and the whole community.

It was a privilege to join with the children, parents, parishioners and governors at the cenotaph for Remembrance Day. Pupils' behaviour both outside and inside the church was exceptional. The pupils walked sensibly for the 10 minutes to the church, the year 6 pupils holding hands with a year R child explaining how it was 'making sure that the younger children were able to cross the road safely'. All pupils showed respect by walking in silence to the cenotaph and standing in absolute silence for the two minutes. The singing at the service was excellent and pupils show a clear understanding of the importance of prayer. The service was a good example of how the school and the worship are making a significant impact on the whole community. Led by the year 4/5 pupils, the service was a very moving experience for all present. Several of the older parishioners spoke about how much they appreciated the service and the recent Harvest Festival. These regular

events, led by the pupils, were 'becoming very special for the whole community'. Prayer and worship are important in the life of the school. All pupils interviewed said how much they enjoy worship and their regular visits to the church. They enjoy writing and sharing prayers, for example the moving prayers written and read at the service of Remembrance. Worship is carefully planned and monitored by the incumbent, pupils and headteacher but the school is aware that with recent events the focus has been on addressing the Ofsted issues and there is now a need to reinstate opportunities for spiritual reflection and prayer across the curriculum. The recently appointed RE ambassadors work closely with the incumbent to plan 'enrichment days' at the church. These are very popular with the pupils and are a combination of opportunities for worship and RE. They are having a significant impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Anglican tradition, key prayers and the Trinity. An example was the church day on Pentecost when a donation of bibles in different languages was made by the parents. Pupils were able to explain about the Holy Spirit and how interesting it was to hear parents read verses in their native language. Future church days are also planned on the Eucharist. The Bible plays a key role in the school and the story club led by the incumbent has given a number of pupils an interest in reading the Bible and bible stories.

The effectiveness of the religious education is satisfactory.

Religious education has a high profile in the school and statutory requirements are met. Standards are in line with the national average for RE with some of the older pupils exceeding this. Discussions with pupils revealed a satisfactory to good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faith traditions, often enhanced by the work linked to the RE days in the church. Year 6 pupils, for example, were eager to point out one of the key differences between Buddhism and Christianity, that 'Buddhists do not believe in God and that the Buddha is regarded as a great teacher. Buddhism is more of a philosophy'. Progress is variable across the school. Where there are year group classes progress is good or better but where there are mixed year groups or crossed key stages progress is less secure. Although there is regular planned monitoring across all subjects, the implications for RE of the new mixed age classes had not been fully recognised. The work scrutiny, carried out with the headteacher, revealed that tasks set lack differentiation and do not always take account of the mixed ages. There is too much emphasis on low level worksheets which hamper progress. All staff teach RE and teaching was judged by HMI in Sept 2013 to be generally good across all subjects. The lessons observed engaged pupils in their learning and showed some good examples of creative, cross-curricular practice. Year R pupils were able to explain how they were making clay diva lamps for Diwali based on the Rama and Sita story and how it was about 'good overcoming evil.' Year 6 pupils explored and understood the difference between a sacred and secular Christmas through an online shopping exercise. Pupils have positive attitudes to RE and all pupils interviewed said how much they like RE and how important it is to learn about other faiths and cultures. Since 2013 the school has appointed RE ambassadors. The ambassadors welcome guests at Church services and work with the senior leadership and incumbent to consider future initiatives. For example, pupils spoke with enthusiasm about how the RE ambassadors organised the Passover meal which involved a Jewish grandparent and how they invited a Hindu parent into school to show the reception class how to make rangoli patterns. The RE subject leader has been in post a year and has produced a detailed action plan in order to raise standards. She has recently attended training on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is working alongside the headteacher to ensure that this is fully embedded in teachers' planning. The school is currently assessing the effectiveness of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus in line with the issues in the new C of E report on RE to give more rigour to the school's assessment and ensure that all pupils achieve well in RE.

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

The school has been through a period of turmoil in recent years culminating in being placed in an Ofsted category and given notice to improve. This had a significant impact on the school's standing in the local community and pupil numbers began dropping. The recent above average SATs results and a settled staff now mean that the school and the parish are ready to move forward into a successful future.

Governors and members of the parish are proud and supportive of their school and comment on the way in which the Christian character of the school has been a support during difficult times. Support for RE and collective worship is strong and the issues from the previous SIAS report have all been addressed. Effective strategies for monitoring and evaluation are now in place across the curriculum and the headteacher and governing body are committed to developing the school into an 'outstanding' church school based on Christian values and principles. This was demonstrated by two visioning evenings held for governors and parents. Although the school is clear about its future direction, not all stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of how the requirements of the new SIAMS framework might support these initiatives. There is a senior leadership team in place and members of this team are developing skills of leading a church school. The headteacher and her team are also benefitting from joint strategic links with an outstanding church school and the other three church schools in the team of churches.

The school has an effective partnership with parents who are actively involved in the life of the school and use their skills and expertise to support pupils' learning. There is also an active prayer group made up of parents, governors and members of the parish. They meet regularly to pray for the school and hold events such as a welcome evening for new parents. In the summer term they held a successful 'pudding evening' for pupils in year 6 and those who have moved into secondary school in year 7. Governors and staff spoke positively about the prayer group and how this event supported pupils with their transition to secondary school. 'Pupils could see that they are prayed for and cared for even when they leave the school.'

There are excellent links with the Parish of St Peter's and the local community. The incumbent is a regular visitor to the school and the PCC give a generous donation to the school each year. A member of staff reports back to the PCC to explain how this money is being used to support pupils' learning. Members of the governing body are regular visitors to the school and report on their visits. Although the school has close links with the Diocese, and the headteacher attends the annual headteachers' conference, the school recognises that in recent months insufficient use has been made of diocesan expertise to help them move forward.

SIAMS report November 2014 Tewin Cowper Church of England Aided Primary School, Tewin AL6 0JU