



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Albury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church End  
Albury  
Hertfordshire  
SG11 2JQ

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Diocese:** St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 3 December 2014

Date of last inspection: September 2009

School's unique reference number: 117419

Headteacher: James Howard

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

#### School context

Albury Primary School is a small, rural primary school which serves the village of Albury and its surrounding area near Bishop's Stortford. Currently there are 54 pupils on roll who are almost all from a White British background. Very few children receive pupil premium funding. 28% pupils have special educational needs. The parish church of St Mary's is adjacent to the school. The headteacher has been in post since September 2013.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Albury as a Church of England school are good.

- The focus on each child as a valued individual in this welcoming and worshipping Christian community ensures positive attitudes amongst its pupils, who become confident, independent learners and achieve well.
- Mutual and substantial links between school, church and village communities are valued by everyone, whether or not they belong to the local Christian community.
- The strong sense of a nurturing and inclusive family environment, underpinned by core Christian values, ensures everyone feels loved and accepted.

#### Areas to improve

- Ensure the school's distinctive Christian character maintains a high profile at every governing body meeting so that evidence of its impact on pupil learning is securely understood, articulated and monitored.
- Embed the monitoring and assessment of religious education [RE] so there is a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress which can be used to inform planning.

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

Albury Primary School provides a very positive learning environment, where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. This is because the school is an inclusive, happy and family community, rooted in the Christian faith. More importantly, the whole school community understands the importance of, and lives out, core Christian values. Pupils' enjoyment of school and their sense of achievement ensures attendance, positively encouraged with termly family rewards for 100% attendance, is good. As a result, attendance has improved and all see the benefit of children taking part and achieving in this inclusive community. Should there be any behaviour issue, school staff constantly provide support and work with parents, ensuring children feel accepted and loved. This reflects Jesus' teaching in the Bible about forgiveness, which is constantly reinforced. It also demonstrates how good relationships make a positive difference to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Data shows that children achieve well in all subjects and results are higher than the national average. This progress over time is very good, given the pupils' starting points. Excellent success stories include children achieving well here who have struggled in other schools. This includes boys who didn't like writing when they first arrived at Albury School, well after the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children attend writing days for gifted and talented pupils. This is because all staff work very hard at building relationships with children in this small close-knit Christian community. Consequently, teachers can identify any child who is not making expected progress and they are able to ensure they engage with learning. As a result, intervention strategies can be planned in terms of personalised learning, using the support of teaching assistants, dialogue with children and working closely with parents. This has been very successful. All achievement is celebrated in a culture where all learning, not just academic, is aspirational, and where a wide variety of extra-curricular activities develops a range of skills. These include sport, music and modern foreign languages. Pupils feel able to make a positive contribution to school life and experience the Christian values of generosity and service through their fundraising. Such values enhance their understanding of their place in the world and their responsibility to others. Pupils show respect for the diverse community they belong to. This is good, and is enriched by visits to places of worship, which includes their parish church, very much seen as an integral extension to this aided village primary school. Thus, RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

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

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. Worship is recognised as an important part of the school day and follows the Christian church year. Adults, including parents, value collective worship, especially the close links with the parish church and the services which they are able to attend. Over the last six months a number of children and their parents have been confirmed. This is a direct result of the church, especially the rector, working closely with the school and nurturing pupils and parents' spiritual development through worship and church services. Pupils say they like worshipping together 'as a whole school' and that worship in church 'makes you feel more holy as that is where you get baptised or christened'. Pupils know that 'in every Bible story there is a moral, such as taking time to think about your actions before you do them'. They are able to make links between the Bible stories they hear and their own lives. They cite the story of Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac as teaching them to trust God. Pupils speak of their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God by speaking of God as creator and saying, 'Jesus looks after the world and the people of the world. We can't see the Holy Spirit but he can see us'. Prayer is an important part of the worshipping life of this school. Pupils know their own prayers are valued. They go on to say their vicar 'goes into church and prays their prayers in front of a statue of Jesus'. They pray the Lord's Prayer 'in church and on special occasions in the hall'. They enjoy writing prayers for worship as well as planning and leading other aspects of worship, saying they would welcome the opportunity to experience this more often. Currently, pupil evaluation on worship is gathered informally.

However, foundation governors and pupils recognise the importance of sharing their viewpoints as well as extending pupil opportunities to lead worship.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good.**

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school where RE is important, teaching is consistently good and standards are in line with other core subjects. RE is led and managed by the headteacher who knows the direction he envisages for this subject to follow. He has an overview of RE through lesson observations and book scrutinies. Pupils are aware of their targets and know how to improve in their work using 'I can' levels. They speak about what they have learnt about Buddhism and Judaism. They welcome visiting other places of worship in order to enhance their learning as well as meeting with people of faith. They can relate the Christian story, but are less secure in their knowledge of some Christian festivals, such as Pentecost. They can explain key concepts such as incarnation in their own words, saying 'the baby will save us'. The youngest pupils re-enact the Christmas Story through role play in their classroom stable. The oldest pupils are able to reflect on the sacred and secular meaning of Christmas. They explain 'secular' as 'to do with worldly affairs not spiritual matters'. However, pupils and adults together recognise the importance of being able to discuss key concepts and questions of faith together in order to deepen their own learning and nurture their spiritual development. Tracking of pupils' progress and assessment is in place. This is good and incorporates key areas about understanding of beliefs and teaching, practices and lifestyles as well as how beliefs are conveyed. However, the school also acknowledges that monitoring and assessment in RE requires time to become more securely embedded in order to continually inform planning and consequently, pupil progress and standards. The school has rightly identified this as a focus for the coming year, with RE demonstrating the value of pupil self-assessment.

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

The school's Christian foundation is effectively promoted by the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff so that the school's Church of England heritage is celebrated and secured. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with church, school and village communities working closely together. A very good example of this is the recent exhibition in the parish church to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. This was an important facet of the community heritage project. Pupils' contributions were much valued and the exhibition was well attended. Staff and governors model terrific Christian values, which includes inner peace which everyone strives to attain. Parents praise the fact that their children's needs are well met and how the wellbeing of pupils is given the highest priority. Collective worship and RE meet the statutory requirements and have a high profile in the school. This is because senior teachers take a strong lead in modelling good practice. In addition, there is a renewed impetus to monitor and evaluate worship and RE more rigorously on the part of the governors to support the development of both areas. Pupils have a voice through the school council, giving them leadership responsibilities, which is good. Areas from the last inspection have been addressed, showing how the school has moved on, with clear priorities for future action. Staff in this small, rural school take on many roles and responsibilities and benefit from the training and support offered to them by the diocese. The school's Christian character is discussed at every governing body meeting. However, currently the governors are not explicitly linking standards and pupil learning to the school's Christian character. They do want all children to achieve and they are all committed to monitoring the performance of the school and to now embed this monitoring more explicitly within the school. They seek to relate this to Christian values, recognising this as a key priority. Above all, the school desires to be true to its mission statement in being 'Guided by God, Aiming for Excellence and Learning for Life'.