



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Ashton St Peter's Voluntary Aided Church of England Lower School

Leighton Court
Dunstable
LU6 1EW

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Central Bedfordshire
Date of inspection: 26 February 2014
Date of last inspection: 20 January 2009
School's unique reference number: 109703
Headteacher: Shirley McGinty
Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

Ashton St Peter's Lower school is a one-form entry school where most pupils are of white British heritage. The proportions of children with special educational needs or with disabilities are below average. In September 2014 the school will become a primary school by extending its provision into years five and six.

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

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

- The commitment, drive and vision of the headteacher, staff and governors to the continuing distinctive character of the school
- The secure relationships between all members of the school
- The impact of Christian values on the academic and personal development of all pupils

Areas to improve

The inspection has identified no areas for development other than those already identified by the school as a result of the cycle of self-assessment and on-going development.

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

The distinctive Christian ethos 'runs through every area of school life as the writing runs through a stick of rock.' This results in the beginning of a spiritual journey where love, care and respect are central in a natural and not an embarrassing or apologetic way. Everyone from the youngest child to governors can articulate that the school is a Christian school where 'we learn about God and Jesus and learn how to be like him.' Children recognise their church school logo with 'the St Peter's Keys of Heaven and learn about God and Jesus.' Children know they are safe to learn from mistakes because 'even when we are wrong, God will forgive us.' Children confidently recount a list of Christian values, explaining 'Jesus told his disciples to spread his word and that is what we do when we share these values.' As a result children have excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. Relationships between everyone in school are excellent because each individual shares Christian love, care and respect. High expectations from adults, along with very effective challenging and supportive teaching, result in confident and articulate pupils who all achieve well above national expectations. A rich curriculum, the powerful ethos and links between religious education (RE) and worship, enable excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children make good use of values areas and prayer tables in classrooms that offer opportunities for reflection and writing prayers. Children have a good understanding of local and global Christianity through RE and support for a range of charities. Children develop an understanding of faith through the high profile of RE in the curriculum that gives a secure understanding of the importance and tolerance of individual belief. The school proclaims and celebrates its distinctive Christian character through displays, statements and symbols and includes Bible references, links to values and reflective questions.

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

Worship is central to the life of the school, giving adults and children opportunities to learn about God and Jesus, to pray, reflect and develop spiritually. A comprehensive policy that is regularly reviewed provides a secure foundation for provision, delivery and evaluation. The morning act of worship sets the tone of the distinctive Christian character for the day. Children are adamant about the impact of worship that 'shows how to behave and treat each other'. There are clear links between values, Christian teachings and Bible references that enable all to develop spiritually. Children have a good understanding of Anglican faith developed through links with the church and the input of local clergy. Children respond to the greeting and confidently share the peace with each other and adults at the beginning of worship. Themes and values are linked to the liturgical year. Children's knowledge of Anglican practice is furthered through their role as acolytes in half termly worship led by the rector in St Peter's Priory and festival services at the end of each term. Children are confident in reciting a range of prayers including the version of the Lord's Prayer that is used in church. They also value the opportunities to reflect, write or say a prayer in the classroom prayer corners. Prayers at governors meetings and the parents' prayer group exemplify the use of prayer in this worshipping community. Children have a good understanding of the life and stories of Jesus. They are developing a secure understanding of the Trinity, explaining 'it is like an apple. The skin is God the Father who protects us. The flesh is like God made flesh who was Jesus and the pips are like the Holy Spirit who makes us grow.' Children are involved in the planning and delivery of worship for special occasions. As a result of a range of evaluation procedures that inform development, the school is currently, for example extending the opportunities for pupil involvement in the planning and delivery of worship.

The effectiveness of religious education is outstanding.

The high profile of religious education results in its status as a core subject. Inspiring leadership as well as work and planning scrutiny, lesson observation and modelling ensure that staff are knowledgeable. This is furthered through end of unit evaluation and feedback. Staff knowledge, confidence and enthusiasm result in high expectations enabling pupils to make at least good

progress. Assessment data confirms that pupils are often working beyond expected levels with achievements comparable to those in literacy. Children are engaged by teaching that is at least good and uses a range of stimuli and religious vocabulary to challenge the thinking of pupils regardless of age. Art in religion is effectively used as a both stimulus and to express personal views. For example, children exploring Buddhism focussed on partly exposed areas of a slide to identify Buddha. Rapid practical activities, such as moving to 'agree, disagree or not sure' with a set of statements reflecting the key truths of Buddhism and 'speed dating' to explore artefacts, challenge quick thinking and responses. Other children designed their own Salvadorian crosses. Cross-curricular links ensure RE is a foundation of the school and children understand its contribution. For example, the use of kennings to describe Jesus illustrates how well children know his life story. Opportunities for reflection and shared discussion impact on spiritual and moral development. They also provide opportunities to pose 'big questions' and recognise awe and wonder. Children are secure in their knowledge of Christianity, with reception children confidently explaining the story of Noah and the symbolism of the dove and rainbow. The 'Around the world week' provides opportunities to explore world faiths. They are also developing a good understanding of global Christianity and denominations through exploring the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa and Polish songs. Visits to other places of worship give pupils a good understanding of the diversity of faith, enabling them to make comparisons with Christianity. A recent visit to a mosque and Muslim school has created a new cross faith link. Work in books confirms the range of learning activities with children responding to teachers' comments on the next stages of learning.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors passionately share a clear vision 'to seek to open our hearts and minds to the love of God and learning'. The distinctive Christian character of the school promoting love, care and respect are proclaimed and experienced as soon as one enters the school. A climate of self-evaluation, review and development ensures that the ethos impacts on each individual and every aspect of the school. The development points from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and further developed. The importance of RE and worship is reflected in their inclusion on the school development plan with a dedicated budget. 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 and the school choir. Effective governors are informed of the work of the school through reports and visits. Each governor is linked to a class and through regular visits tracks the class through the school. This secures first hand experience of the impact of the distinctive Christian character on attainment and personal development. Governors know the strengths and areas for development of the school because of their visits, feedback from the RE working party and involvement in learning walks that allow them to identify the display and celebration of the Christian ethos. These experiences fully inform the accurate self-assessment. The high expectations for staff, underpinned by a programme of curriculum and personal development and visits to other schools are reflected in the high achievement of pupils. Strategic planning identifies a budget to induct new staff before they join the school, as it becomes a primary school next academic year. Parents acknowledge the impact of the school on the personal faith and achievement of pupils. Typical of the many comments are 'there is warmth and love for everyone and respect for life outside of school' and 'children naturally give thanks to God.' They also acknowledge the reaching out of the school 'especially in times of difficulty.' The school has strong links with other local church schools and community groups that use the school hall.

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