

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

<p><b>Edwinstree Church of England Middle School</b></p> <p><b>Nolfolk Road</b></p> <p><b>Buntington</b></p> <p><b>SG9 9AW</b></p> <p><b>Diocese: St Albans</b></p> <p>Local Authority: Hertfordshire Date of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012 Date of last inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2008 School's unique reference number:117554 Headteacher: Julie Michael Inspectors' names and numbers: Mrs Lilian Weatherley 42</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>School context</b></p> <p>Edwinstree is a Church of England voluntary controlled school serving the town of Buntingford and the surrounding villages. The school caters for pupils aged 9 to 13 and there are currently 454 pupils on role. The majority of pupils are of white British origin with only a few pupils from ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has received the Sportsmark, Activemark, ECO School Bronze, National Healthy school status and since the last inspection has achieved the International school award. The recent Ofsted May 2012 report judged the school to be 'outstanding'.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Edwinstree Church of England Middle School as a Church of England school is 'outstanding'</b></p> <p>Edwinstree states in its aims that it is a place of opportunity to give the best experiences of learning and to provide all pupils with life-changing opportunities for now and the future. The standards achieved and progress made by all pupils as well as the quality of the teaching and learning and relationships make this an 'outstanding' school. Embedded in this is the school's distinctive Christian ethos which has improved significantly since the last inspection.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Established strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All pupils are treated as special and unique individuals in the sight of God.</li><li>• Standards of achievement and progress of all pupils</li><li>• The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect.</li><li>• The quality of relationships and the excellent behaviour of pupils</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Focus for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enable all new members of the governing body and staff to receive training to understand fully what it means to be an 'outstanding' Church of England School</li><li>• Involve all staff, governors, parents and children in rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's Christian character.</li></ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is 'outstanding' at meeting the needs of all learners</b></p> <p>The school has worked hard to embed its Christian ethos into all areas. The essence of which can be seen through the actions and personal interactions which permeate the life of the school. The school is a welcoming, caring educational community where Christian values are implicit.</p>

Relationships within the school are exemplary, creating a community where all members have a distinct awareness of others, creating an environment in which pupils achieve well. Teaching and learning are judged to be good to outstanding and standards and progress of pupils is high. Pupils are fully aware of the Christian character of the school and speak confidently and positively about being at a church school. Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. They enjoy school and find their learning fun. Behaviour and relationships between staff and pupils is 'outstanding'.

Pupils feel the school to be a place where they are safe, secure and valued by adults. When asked what they liked about the school one pupil said 'We are a big, safe community' and others commented that 'the school is safe and caring' and 'we are all improving our levels'. There is sense of fellowship among the school community with older pupils supporting the younger ones. Through the school council pupils feel that their views are taken into account.

Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are visible throughout the school and curriculum. The reflective garden and the thought board on 'ultimate questions' in the grounds are used extensively and have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development. Pupils speak highly of the excellent range of cross-curricular activities especially those including music and drama, for example the recent work on Shakespeare, the musical production of Pirates of Penzance as well as the residential visits to France and the Peak district. Charitable giving, harvest offerings and delivery and the REACH links with Rwanda all enable pupils to develop a deeper understanding of the community and those from a different cultures and has helped improve the quality of pupils cultural development.

### **The impact of Collective Worship on the school community is 'outstanding'**

The school has moved forward since the previous inspection and has significantly increased opportunities for quiet personal reflection and prayer to allow pupils to consider their own emotional and spiritual response. The pupils enjoy worship and enter and leave with calm and respect. These times have become a central expression of the school's Christian ethos. Pupils say how much they enjoy the opportunities to be part of the worship, 'It is always kept different so it keeps fresh'. They enjoy making the films which are then shown to other pupils. For example, the film made by Year 5 pupils about their dreams for the future was shown on the day of the inspection. One pupil commented how it was 'a moving experience and gave a feeling that something special is happening'. All staff attend worship and lead their own class worship based on some excellent 'Thought for the Week' material which is produced by the worship co-ordinator. This has been recognised by the pupils as important. One pupil explained how 'The inspirational message really makes you think'. All pupils know the Lord's Prayer but the hymn singing on the day of the inspection lacked enthusiasm. The pupils explained that they would like to have more input into the hymns chosen.

Since the last inspection the school has made use of Royston Church to develop their Easter services and as a large church they are able to invite parents. Although the school celebrates most of the major Christian festivals and saint's days, most of these are held in the school hall as the local churches are all too small to hold members of the school community. The result is that pupils at this time of the term have grown considerably over the year and are squeezed in to the current hall. The school would like to have more opportunities to invite parents and parishioners into worship but a lack of space prevents this. With an expanding school population a new hall would greatly enhance the worship possibilities and enable parents and local parishioners to experience worship alongside the pupils. The school has also decided to take all of the pupils to St Albans to experience worship as part of their fortieth anniversary celebrations but the cost implications for these trips is enormous.

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

Much has been set in place to develop the school's Christian character since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in the quality of worship provided; the links and visits to Royston Church and the visible signs and symbols around the school. The tapestry in the hall, the planned for stained glass window and visit to St Alban's Cathedral to celebrate 40 years of the

school are clear examples of this. The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear commitment to developing this area and are passionate about ensuring that the ethos is embedded to the benefit of each child as a unique person. The assistant headteacher and RE subject leader work closely together to ensure that RE and collective worship have a high profile within the life of the school and make a significant contribution towards the school's success. The governors also wish to ensure that a distinctive Christian ethos remains at the heart of the school but have not received any diocesan training or been involved in any self-evaluation. Much is taking place and evident around the school but it is often implicit. What is still lacking is a rigorous and focused self-evaluation which the school can share with governors and all stakeholders and which would reveal further opportunities and any gaps in current practice. For example pupils expressed a wish to visit different places of worship in Religious Education: 'Maybe for RE we could go on school trips to different churches, synagogues and mosques'.

The new chair of governors is aware of the need for training and is eager for all governors and local clergy to be clear as to how the school can continue this journey and improve further. The school reaches out to the local community and cares strongly about national and global issues. The International School award has increased awareness of different cultures as well as the range of charitable links and community projects.

SIAS report Edwinstree Church of England Middle School