

# National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

## Ickleford VC Primary School

The Green  
Ickleford  
Hitchin  
SG5 3YG

### Diocese:

Local authority: Hertfordshire  
Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
Date of last inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2008  
School's unique reference number: 117401  
Headteacher: Sue Dury  
Inspector's name and number: Lindsay Fraser 107

### School context

Ickleford VC School is a smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average. The number of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are also below the national average, although the proportion of those at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is broadly average. Many pupils live within the village, although the school also attracts pupils from the town and nearby villages.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Ickleford VC Primary School as a Church of England school are good.

This is because relationships within the school are very good and all members of staff are committed to providing the best possible education for the pupils in their care. The development and tracking of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the contribution of Religious Education to the Christian Distinctiveness of the school are areas of particular strength.

### Established strengths

- The input of Reverend Margaret and her inspirational work, guidance and collaboration is recognised by all stakeholders.
- The development of emotional literacy through Values Education underpins the success in establishing SMSC development (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) throughout the curriculum.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment to learning about the world around them through searching for deeper truths and through a developing reflective practice is evidence of the importance of a strong Christian ethos.

### Focus for development

- Increase the impact of Collective Worship on the school community through cohesive planning based on self-evaluation and the development of pupil leadership in this area.
- Develop self-evaluation of the Distinctive Christian Character and increase professional development at all levels in order to realise the school's ambition to become an outstanding Church School.

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

Although the ethos of the school is strong in promoting positive relationships, achievement and behaviour, the Christian Distinctiveness is not explicitly articulated in documentation and by stakeholders. Stakeholders do not always appreciate the contribution which a Christian inspiration of values makes to the needs of all learners. To add a Christian dimension to the development of Values Education will further enhance their understanding of some of the more challenging of values. Parents, however, are already beginning to speak of the impact of Values Education on themselves through their children's discussions, 'especially that of patience!' Parents also perceive that Christian values impact upon pupils' good academic achievement because 'Children are encouraged to feel good about themselves' and 'the ethos and respect throughout the school enables teachers to teach'. Parents also fully appreciate the 'Open Door' policy of the Headteacher, enabling problems and concerns to be addressed without delay. Pupils recognise that Christianity is a world-wide faith and they recognise the need to understand and respect diversity and difference within their own school community and within the wider world. Religious Education contributes significantly to pupils' developing SMSC and Christian Distinctiveness because lessons are carefully planned to involve a range of learning styles. Pupils in Year 6 were very enthusiastic about the lesson they had enjoyed where they were encouraged to ask 'ultimate questions' and to consider what constituted thoughtful and not so thoughtful comments about the nature of God. Throughout the school there is a growing understanding of the concept of spirituality which begins in the Foundation Stage (Reception Class) where pupils participated in a stilling exercise to reflect upon and then discuss their special places and their characteristics.

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

The impact of some aspects of Collective Worship is very good and pupils are readily able to articulate inspirational and engaging activities. They were able to recall how the value of friendship could be demonstrated through the Good Samaritan in an Act of Worship led by Reverend Margaret; they described with enthusiasm her role play of the doctor tending the Samaritan. They were then able to understand and explain that they could be a friend to others beyond their own community of friends. Knowledge and understanding of Anglican practice is a strong feature also of Reverend Margaret's Collective Worship. Pupils are demonstrating a growing awareness of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit because of the importance given in Collective Worship to the Trinity; God would not have made His promises without leaving something behind. Reverend Margaret is also enabling pupils in Years 5 and 6 to gain an understanding of the Communion Service. This provides pupils with the opportunity and knowledge to make informed choices for themselves. A greater emphasis on the use of Biblical material in other Acts of Worship will enable pupils' understanding of Christian Values to be further enhanced. This will be achieved by a more cohesive approach to planning, in collaboration with members of the Church and school community, together with further professional development. Pupils are well behaved in Collective Worship and a more positive attitude amongst all pupils has been noticeable over the past two years. They responded well to an introduction on Unity through an opening activity based on Manchester United which was further developed through a Bible passage on Christ as the Cornerstone. It is important to ensure that Worship is kept relatively simple in order that younger pupils remain engaged and attentive. Evaluation and monitoring of Collective Worship, a focus for development at the previous inspection, is crucial in order to inform future improvement. Although some pupils already contribute prayers to Collective Worship and participate occasionally, older pupils are eager and ready to take on greater responsibility to plan and deliver Collective Worship.

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

Where there is excellent practice within the school this can be attributed to excellent leadership. The headteacher, who has been in place less than two years, has already introduced an effective Values Based Education which is appreciated by all members of staff and the parent body. This is now led with expertise by another member of staff and, together with the leadership of the Religious Education co-ordinator and Headteacher, there is great potential to incorporate a more rigorous approach to developing the Distinctive Christian Character of the school. It is vital that monitoring and evaluation at all levels, including that of the Governing Body, takes place to ensure that the quality of Collective Worship and the approach to developing the Distinctive Christian Character fulfils the expectations of a Voluntary Controlled School. This was a focus for development at the time of the previous inspection, together with the requirement that areas for development as a church school should be included in the school development plan. Currently values in a Christian context are expressed at an implicit rather than an explicit level and opportunities are missed, such as on the school website, to explain the Christian context of the school. There has been some professional development in the leadership of a Church School, described as very informative by a participant and is an area to be considered for those in leadership roles. This will enable stakeholders to participate more informatively in self-evaluation and therefore school improvement.

There is an extremely strong partnership with the local church and clergy who give generously of their time and resources. The school is also enthusiastically supported by the parent body, especially the Parent and Teachers' Association whose fund-raising contributes substantially to the provision of resources within the school, thus enhancing the experiences of all pupils.

SIAMS report June 2013 - Ickleford C of E VC Primary School, The Green, Ickleford, Hitchin, SG5 3YG