



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Little Gaddesden Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Road
Little Gaddesden
Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire
HP4 1NX

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 2 April 2014

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2009

School's unique reference number: 117443

Headteacher: Mrs Charis Geoghegan

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Lizzie McWhirter MA 244

School context

Little Gaddesden enjoys a close relationship with the nearby parish church of St Peter and St Paul and is a popular school because of its Christian values and its rural location, adjacent to The National Trust's Ashridge Estate. It is also a high achieving school. Currently, there are 102 pupils on roll, who are mainly from a White British background.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Little Gaddesden as a Church of England school are good.

- The strong sense of a Christian family community; enjoying the flourishing partnerships between church, school and village, embraced by all.
- The supportive Christian environment, enabling positive attitudes amongst its pupils who become confident learners and achieve highly.
- The quality of collective worship and religious education [RE] which supports pupils' spiritual development.

Areas to improve

- Enhance the evaluation of collective worship by involving pupils and governors together and by enabling pupils to take on the ownership of worship to ensure best quality worship.
- Embed a systematic method for governors to monitor and evaluate RE in order to inform and improve the pupils' learning and progress, ensuring excellence.

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

Little Gaddesden sustains an excellent learning environment, where pupils are proud to belong, feel valued and achieve highly. Little Gaddesden sets out to, and achieves excellent attainment where all pupils have exceeded expected targets. An excellent example of this is in May 2013 when the results were outstanding for pupil progress. Attendance is outstanding and is currently at 97%. There have been no exclusions for the last few years. Behaviour is excellent and relationships are exemplary. Governors and the Parochial Church Council [PCC] are truly supportive of this rural aided primary school and to this end have ensured that needy pupils were able to attend workshops for the more able pupils at St Alban's Abbey and a residential to the Isle of Wight as well as providing lap tops to give access to learning. Within this cohesive family, there is a very strong sense of what it means to live by the Christian values of trust, thankfulness, wisdom, courage, love and hope in a community in which church and school links are immensely important and where such values, based on Jesus' teaching in The Bible, are very evident amongst staff and pupils. This is what drives the school to achieve such positive outcomes. Pupils speak of the importance of Bible stories and prayer and of the Christian values, which are lived out in this Christian community, with parents speaking of the shared values across all religions, which are evident here. Parents praise the fact that their children have a very good grounding and are 'encouraged to be confident and comfortable in the positive environment' which enables them to 'think outside the box'. Learning is aspirational here, not just academic. Little Gaddesden values a wide range of achievement, both in and out of school. Pupils say they value their teachers, their friends, and the clubs they have the opportunity to participate in. Pupils thrive here and feel able to make a positive contribution, especially through sport and music. Pupils experience the Christian values of service and gratitude through fundraising activities, which also enhances their global awareness. Such activities enable pupils to gain an understanding of their place in the community and their responsibility to others. Pupils show respect for diverse communities, enhanced by visits to places such as Neasden Mandir and the local Buddhist monastery. Bright, prominent displays together with quiet, prayer spaces in classrooms greatly enhance pupils' spiritual development as do the school grounds, which include a quiet area and the wildlife garden. Pupils especially value the 'butterfly garden where pebble stones are placed. We go down and sit on little logs and have some time to ourselves or we go down with our friends so we are not alone. We think and talk to each other. Sometimes we just look around and think how God made all of this: he's really powerful.' In addition, The Forest School is situated in the nearby grounds of the Ashridge Estate, encouraging pupils to be thankful and reflect on God's creation around them.

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. Prayerful and meaningful worship takes place, with a focus on Christian values and Jesus' teaching in The Bible. Such worship is valued by children, parents and governors. During Lent, pupils are able to reflect on Jesus' temptation in the desert, mindful of 'people who are not as well off as us'. They are able to make connections with Bible stories, with one pupil citing Job 'who was able to still believe and trust in God, even when he got destroyed and his family were taken away. It makes me feel I would never turn away from him'. Pupils say that 'sometimes we go up to church for the services. It is a lot more peaceful and you can concentrate'. When taking on the role of a disciple in the Easter service, one pupil comment was, 'it helps me to think that Jesus did it for all of us'. Pupils acknowledge the importance of prayer, recalling the image of a pretzel as a sign of peace, prayer and love; reflecting on using The Lord's Prayer and the school prayer, saying 'how lucky we are to have this school and to have a good education'. They describe forgiveness as 'the need to move on' as well as avoiding temptation, which is 'an attraction, but what you shouldn't do'; keeping true to their chosen Christian values, such as trust and relying on each other. Both the parish priest and the Baptist minister are regular and welcome visitors to school, leading worship. Key festivals are celebrated in St Peter and St Paul's Church, including the Harvest service, which was celebrated by the Bishop of St Albans. Pupils have some understanding of The Holy Trinity, saying 'The Holy Spirit helps us believe in Jesus and God'. They have some knowledge of St Peter and St Paul and can explain the incarnation in their own words. Pupils welcome more involvement in worship, such as drama as well as planning and leading worship. They also say they would like to 'do more than be invited up to

say a prayer at the end of worship' and would enjoy 'writing down their thoughts without feeling scared' and sharing these with teachers, governors and worship leaders to improve worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

Pupils clearly enjoy their RE lessons in this school where RE is important, and teaching is consistently good and in line with other core subjects; saying they have learnt about how people 'pray differently and how their life actually is'. They cite the local Buddhists who 'meditate and concentrate and cross their legs'. Most pupils have a good knowledge of Christianity, reflecting on the Easter Passion narrative and the events of Holy Week when Jesus was betrayed saying that 'friendship is worth more than money', as a KS2 pupil explained. There is a strong programme of visitors and visits in place, including to St Paul's Cathedral as well as local places of faith and worship, such as mosques and gurdwaras. Older pupils here have the opportunity to enter their RE art work for the national Spirited Arts competition. They are aware of their targets and know how to improve in their work, whether they have done 'really well and what isn't so good because our teachers highlight and comment on our work'. Pupils have the opportunity to ask ultimate questions in RE, often linked to art and drama, such as 'Why are we who we are?' Year 2 pupils explore 'What did Jesus give up for love?' and Year 6 pupils study the importance of Jesus to Christians. Such enquiry methods encourage reflection on topics such as responsibility and reflecting God's love as seen in the symbol of the cross, which nurtures their spiritual development. As a result, pupils achieve well. Some pupils experienced a diocesan day at St Albans for gifted and talented pupils and the opportunity to work within the diocesan family of church schools. This gave pupils an opportunity to experience RE through the creative arts, using enquiry skills and collaborative methods. As a result, the school has identified the need for establishing an RE day with another school. RE is led by the headteacher in partnership with one of the senior teachers, ensuring the headteacher maintains an overview and that lesson observations and book scrutinies take place and assessment is in place. However, link governors are not currently working in partnership with the school in monitoring RE on a systematic basis, having identified this as a priority for the next phase of the school development plan.

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

Little Gaddesden's Christian foundation is effectively promoted by the headteacher, clergy, governors and staff so that the school's Church of England foundation is celebrated. There is a real sense of belonging, identity and involvement with church and school working closely together. Excellent relationships show the key role that Christian values play in the life of the school. Many parents speak of how 'every person is valued and gifted and how the children come first'. Parents go on to praise the teachers, saying how approachable the headteacher is, 'always in the playground in the morning', saying 'the open-ness is extraordinary here'. They speak highly of how the staff of this rural primary 'know the children so well'. Some parents attribute this to 'The Golden Rules being completely embedded in the school'. Parents acknowledge that all needs are identified and addressed in this school where the children are 'stretched and challenged'. Pupils have a voice through the school council. The church provides all leavers with a Bible, showing the good partnerships which exist in this village community. Collective worship and RE meet the statutory requirements and are both a priority for the future. Areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. Some monitoring of worship takes place. Foundation governors are committed to the school, providing opportunities for staff development. Moreover, Little Gaddesden values support from the diocese, providing training and staff and governor development. They are open to new ways of fulfilling their role, such as the monitoring of RE by a link governor to support the monitoring carried out by the headteacher. To this end, the school recognises the need for the status and progression of this key subject to be kept on a high profile as an integral part of the school's development plan in order to enhance pupil learning and progress; and for this to be constantly, regularly and robustly raised with the whole governing body. The school does not currently evaluate the impact of its Christian character and values on pupils 'academic progress and spiritual development.