



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Renhold Church of England Voluntary Controlled Lower School

**Church End, Bedford MK 41 0LU**

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Bedford Borough

Dates of inspection: Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

Date of last inspection: Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008

School's unique reference number: 109603

Head teacher: Mrs E J Ferguson

Inspector's name and number: Mrs Mel Adams 58

#### School Context

Renhold Church of England VC Lower School, though smaller than average, has increased pupil numbers to 174, and includes the recently incorporated Renhold Pre-School. Attainment on entry fluctuates year on year but is broadly in line with average, with children making significant progress so that by the time they leave in year 4, attainment and progress over time are significantly above average. The school enjoys a very good working relationship with its church, All Saints Renhold.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Renhold VC Lower School as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The commitment to Christian values drives the school in its ambition for every child to be the best that they can be ensuring that each child has the opportunity to maximise their opportunities to learn and make progress
- The very strong Christian ethos provides a secure environment for children's academic and personal development.
- The children have a clear understanding of their values encapsulated in their motto, 'Serving God with a Smile' which supports both learning and play.
- The on-going commitment to pastoral care, both by those who work in the school and governors, enables all children to feel valued and supported.
- The commitment to spiritual and moral development is evident across the curriculum.

#### Areas to improve

- Develop children's current roles in supporting the leading of worship to enable them to plan and lead acts of worship for classes and the whole school.
- Provide further opportunities for personal prayer
- Further develop understanding of the Holy Trinity by ensuring that children develop their understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit

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

The school continues to be outstanding because all staff and children have a clear understanding that the values which are explicitly taught, learned and practised every day are rooted in the teaching of Jesus, described by one child, 'so that we can be like Him'.

There is a tenacious drive, shared by all who work in the school, to ensure that every individual child has the opportunity to fulfil their potential by removing any barriers to punctuality, attendance, academic and personal and spiritual development. Along with attainment, attendance is very good. Developing constantly, the school has identified its own strategic areas for development since the previous inspection. These include the development of spirituality which is exemplified in creating opportunities for reflection whether in worship, or on a woodland walk. It also appears in religious education, where the year 3 class reflected on the life cycle of a leaf, leading to a sense of the greatness of God as creator. Children develop their understanding of Christian values as they move through the school, leading to exceptional spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding through well planned curriculum opportunities to support this. Children in the reception class were able to express a range of feelings: happy, angry and sad, through colours and this helped them to reflect on their own behaviour. By year 4, children are able to articulate ownership of their values and how they help to support them in school, and beyond through their links with charities in other countries such as 'Love in a Box'. Behaviour is excellent as are relationships throughout the school amongst those who work and learn there. One child said that if we didn't have Christian values, 'we wouldn't get on, it would be horrible!' Children have a growing understanding that Christianity has a number of expressions through a range of regular visitors to worship from different denominations. Their links with Christian work in different countries helps them to understand that it is a global faith. Religious education gives them a deepening understanding of the Christian faith as they move through the school. In the year 2 class children, through recording their learning in a range of creative ways, were then able to discuss what forgiveness meant to them. Through constructing art describing worship in colour, a child in year 4 described that she was painting the sun gold which is bright to represent 'God who is the brightest'.

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

Children and staff meet daily to enjoy worship and participate together in singing, reflection, role play and interactive opportunities. Children understand the centrality of the person of Jesus and how, 'he came to earth to show us how to behave'. They have a clear understanding of God the Father and Jesus the Son, explaining that: 'God is like Jesus' birth father and Joseph looked after Him on earth'. They have some awareness of 'Jesus with us all the time', but do not have a clear understanding about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Children take what they have learned in worship into their day to day lives in school. The demonstration of values is celebrated by the school community through the school's 'Golden Value' awards. Through a growing awareness of the example of Jesus and people of faith, children are inspired to reach out to support each other day by day and to others beyond the school through their links with a range of charities. A varied programme of worship across the week enables children to learn from different Christian faith traditions, and in different ways. Plans for collective worship are agreed by staff following on-going and formal evaluations, identifying values and areas for further development which are significant in supporting the children's personal development throughout the school community. The vicar is a regular visitor, leading worship in school and at the church enabling children to have an understanding of Christian values, festivals and the Church year. Governors attend and have a real understanding of the way in which daily worship supports individuals and the day to day life of the school. Children are very efficient and discreet in supporting the organisation of worship. They take part spontaneously during worship times and through reading from the Bible or saying prayers but do not plan and deliver worship. Prayer is important in collective worship and children understanding that they can pray at other times. One child described how her fear of the dark was being overcome as she prayed 'do not be afraid' as she went upstairs. There are currently no organised opportunities for personal prayer at other times of day.

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

The head teacher is unequivocal in her commitment to ensuring that every individual child is given the opportunity to maximise their potential for spiritual, academic, and personal development while they are at Renhold. This drive is motivated by Christian values and is shared by those who work in the school day by day. The tenacity with which attendance and punctuality are pursued along with a far reaching commitment to pastoral support are described by the extended services manager as being inspired by the Christian ethos of the school, where 'there is more scope to care'. Self-evaluation is systematic and rigorous, conducted by the head teacher and teaching staff, who regularly identify strategic outcomes for development. This is affirmed by the inspection where possible areas identified for development were already in the school's plans.

Governors are involved in evaluation and development planning, working with the school in the drive to fulfil its vision and values as a church school. They experience the impact of these in attendance at acts of worship and also informally through talking with children where they speak of their values such as peacefulness and kindness. There are some discussions with different stakeholders such as the consultation with local faith leaders, parents and children on vision and values. This has contributed to the school's annual evaluation and development planning where the most recently identified area, to develop understanding of the Bible, has resulted in children beginning to demonstrate their knowledge of characters from the Old Testament. The school does not systematically gather the views of children about their experiences in school, including the impact of Christian values. Leaders have ensured that they have addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection: the impact of collective worship on the school community and the roles of governors in monitoring the school as a church school continue to develop well. The school has since identified other areas for development, most recently to further develop spirituality. Professional development is well organised and staff at all levels have on-going opportunities to attend a range of training, including attendance at retreats, to further their understanding of the impact of their work with the children. This is particularly evident in learning in worship and religious education, and how this translates into the excellent behaviour around the school and the commitment to very good learning behaviour.

SIAMS report October 2013 Renhold Church of England VC Lower School, Bedford MK41 0LU