



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Nash Mills Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Belswains Lane, Nash Mills, Hemel Hempstead HP3 9XB

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current Inspection grade : Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 13 June 2016

Date of last inspection: 06 May 2011

School's unique reference number: 117418

Headteacher: Rosie Washford-Mower

Inspector's name and number: Judith Ruff 528

School context

Nash Mills Church of England Primary is an average sized school on the edge of the large town of Hemel Hempstead with 240 pupils on roll. Percentages of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium monies and those receiving support for special educational needs and disabilities are below the national average. The school is linked with the church of St Mary's Apsley End and has benefited from a long serving team rector's involvement in the Christian life of the school.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Nash Mills as a Church of England school are good.

- Christian values of love, care and respect, demonstrated daily, have a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem, attitudes and the standard of their work
- A Christian family environment has resulted in positive behaviour systems, deep trusting relationships which encourage independence, pupil responsibility and the growth of thoughtful, articulate and reflective individuals
- The embedding of opportunities, such as through the reflections council, for both adults and children to engage together in discussion about what makes a successful and effective church school, results in mature, thoughtful debates and informed actions

Areas to improve

- To formalise a monitoring and evaluation system in the areas of collective worship and RE to inform further improvement, leading to impact which is clearly shown through subsequent discussions and debates between senior school leaders and governors
- To increase pupils' understanding of other Christian denominations so that they can appreciate the diversity and richness to be found within the Christian traditions
- To ensure that governors understand standards and progress in RE on an annual basis, so that they can ask relevant questions and challenge outcomes where necessary

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

'In this school, children accept each other regardless of religion, background and personal opinions. They unite around shared values and a deeply embedded sense of family and community'. This parent's view was unanimously endorsed by the large group of parents who came in to share their personal experiences of Nash Mills and its work. The school's current strapline 'Purposeful, challenging and stimulating learning within a caring Christian community' summarises the school's commitment to its Christian foundation and heritage. The relentless focus on improving standards for all pupils is demonstrated by the wide range of strategies that are deployed to support pupils with social and emotional barriers to learning as well as academic ones. Pupils' enter school generally with skills and experiences below those expected for their age. They make good rates of progress across the school and leave with achievement levels above national averages. The use of two trained counsellors to build up pupils' levels of emotional resilience and self-confidence has had a very beneficial impact. Incentives such as 'Star of the Week' now increasingly linked to pupils demonstrating the focused value, are popular and successfully motivate pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of Bible stories and can talk about Biblical characters, such as Moses, showing perseverance throughout his life to accomplish what God had planned for him. A staff member leads a weekly 'JIGSAW' (Jesus in games, songs and worship) club which further deepens pupils' understanding of the Christian faith. Opportunities to link values with current role models are very successfully taken up, such as the recent 'Queen's 90th birthday picnic', where pupils were clear about the Queen's faithfulness and service, based on her firm Christian faith and shown throughout her long reign. Attendance rates are very high and although there has recently been a fixed term exclusion, this action is always seen as a last resort. The school fully utilises its Christian character to nourish, encourage and challenge the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners. This has recently been further strengthened through an audit, enabling all staff to understand the importance of developing pupils' spirituality across the school, particularly through increased opportunities for prayer and reflection. A range of pupil councils, house captains, head boy and girl and many other buddying arrangements enable pupils to develop as thoughtful, articulate members of the school community. They make a real contribution to the distinctive Christian character through their involvement in the reflections council where they have recently been re-working the school's mission and ethos statements, alongside both staff and governors. 'I feel involved and have really enjoyed opportunities to work with adults and listen to everyone's opinion' said one pupil. The council has resulted in keen, well engaged pupil leadership, all of whom have relished and grown hugely in their appreciation of what makes a successful and effective church school. Relationships across the school are mutually supportive, open and trusting. Pupils' understanding of Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith is boosted by the school's link with the Diocese of Kajo-Keji in South Sudan and the long serving sponsorship of two South Sudanese students through their schooling. Pupils' awareness of diversity within the Christian faith is less well developed. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school through its deepening of pupils' understanding of other world faiths, enabling them to begin to compare and contrast beliefs and ideas, relating these to their own experiences and observations of a Christian community in action.

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

'High quality, prayerful and meaningful worship is at the heart of the school day'. This is an accurate self-description of the importance and relevance that the headteacher and the whole school community place on the daily act of worship. Planning is completed conscientiously and thoroughly, mainly by the collective worship leader, who works exceptionally hard to ensure that when other staff lead worship, they have all the support and resources that they require. The act of worship on the inspection day, showed how prayerfully and reflectively both adults and staff respond to high quality stimuli for worship. The headteacher's telling of the story of 'The Giving Tree' had the pupils transfixed, with subsequent discussions showing the deep levels of maturity and spiritual growth that were being developed. 'The man was greedy and

selfish, but the tree showed true love and gave the boy everything he had to keep him happy'. Pupils' understanding of prayer has been developed very successfully through an active 'Prayer Day' organised by the reflections council, the recent school prayer competition and opportunities to write prayers at special services, such as that on Remembrance Day. Pupils are given good opportunities to plan and lead worship and this has enabled them to have a deeper, more mature understanding of why worship is so important to Christians. Anglican liturgy is very successfully introduced through the bidding prayer at the lighting of the candle and the termly Key Stage 2 Eucharist service, leading to a growing confidence and familiarity with the structure of Anglican worship. Visitors leading collective worship include the rector and a local Christian charity worker who has made a significant impact on pupils' enjoyment and understanding of the Christian faith, particularly through the distribution of Bibles in Year 3 at the school. Collective worship is organised in a varied and engaging way. Pupils are given good opportunities to work with buddies to discuss values and the impact that these have on their lives. The church is used three times a year for festival and end of year services enabling both pupils and their families to share worship experiences. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the book 'What I learned in worship today' and this shows a growing understanding of pupils about how life should be lived. 'If you lie you are trapped in a box, if you tell the truth you are free from the box'. Pupils understand the importance of Jesus for Christians and the school supports their developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit well through Trinitarian prayers. Governors monitor collective worship on an ad hoc basis and some written reports have been received. However, the present monitoring is not leading into an evaluation system that demonstrates improved provision as an outcome to subsequent discussions about what has been observed.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

A scrutiny of RE books across the year groups shows that standards of attainment and rates of progress are largely in line with national expectations. For some pupils, examples of higher achievement are evident, particularly in the extended writing opportunities given within the curriculum. Teachers are using marking and feedback opportunities well to extend pupils' understanding and increasingly pupils are being given opportunities to respond to this teacher feedback. During the inspection, good levels of support and encouragement were demonstrated for pupils with special educational needs, resulting in these pupils flourishing during discussion times and having very positive attitudes towards RE. Pupils interviewed spoke of how much they appreciate RE as an opportunity to build up 'a family feel and respect for each other through sharing of faith experiences, including those who have no beliefs'. Consistent and rigorous monitoring of RE by the subject leader has addressed any misconceptions amongst staff members and encouraged staff to seek help and support where knowledge of a specific religion is not secure. RE is taught creatively and in a stimulating, cross-curricular way. For example, Year 6 pupils were working on a unit focused on the work of 'Amnesty International', which included compiling a list of five basic human rights. This really captured the pupils' imagination and resulted in some very high quality discussion about what rights we may take for granted, particularly in the developed world. Teaching is good in RE as seen on the learning walk and through past internal lesson observations. Teachers have had access to a good range of external trainers, including those from the diocese and this has continued to move the quality of provision on. Pupils are able to share, discuss and debate issues presented in RE frequently from their own personal faith experiences and understandings. This adds a richness and a relevance to the subject, which draws pupils into the discussions taking place. A varied programme of visits to places of worship enriches pupils' experiences and deepens learning. Governors have accompanied these school visits and written good, detailed accounts of the experience. However, there is no formal governor monitoring system in place for RE and thus little impact is demonstrated from governor involvement in RE work at the school.

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

School leaders, including governors, deeply value the school's Christian foundation. The headteacher has provided committed and passionate leadership over a significant period of time. This is based on a Christian vision of inclusiveness and valuing each child as unique and made in the image of God, therefore precious in His sight. This commitment to inclusiveness extends to community partnerships which are respected and developed through excellent systems for gathering and receiving stakeholder feedback on the Christian distinctiveness of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their praise of the headteacher and her staff for their care, concern and compassion for every child in the school, developed daily through the well embedded programme of Christian values. Importantly, tasks such as revisiting the school's mission and ethos are seen as everyone's opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas. The school leaders have addressed the areas for development well from the previous inspection. Governors are now more closely involved with the school development strand on promoting a shared strategic direction for the school as a church school. The reflections council has given governor representatives a valuable opportunity to work alongside both pupils and staff to gain their perspectives and ideas. Self-evaluation processes have included governor perspectives, although discussions at main governor meetings regarding SIAMS related issues are not sufficiently frequent. Diocesan training opportunities are being taken up by governors and this is resulting in an increased understanding of the role of governors in a church school. The newly appointed deputy headteacher, who commences in the next school year, has already been booked onto diocesan training.

SIAMS report June 2016 Nash Mills C of E VA Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9XB