



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Wareside Church of England Primary School

Reeves Green, Ware SG12 7QR

**Previous SIAMS grade:** Good

**Current inspection grade:** Good

**Diocese:** St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 23 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 28 September 2010

School's unique reference number: 117412

Headteacher: Wendy-May Foster

Inspector's name and number: Judith Ruff 528

#### School context

The school is much smaller than the average sized primary school, with 44 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection. Pupils come from Wareside village and the surrounding area to attend the school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pupil Premium eligibility is low and those with special educational needs and disabilities is below average. Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. The church of the Holy Trinity is a short walking distance from the school. The rector is the current chair of governors.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Wareside as a Church of England school are good.

- The clarity and aspirations for the school as a church school are modelled through the highly effective working partnership of the headteacher and rector. This enables and encourages discussions leading into practice that raises the quality of church school distinctiveness
- The impact of the four core Christian values selected on the children's personal development and well-being enable children to articulate confidently how each value has contributed to their overall growth, progress and achievement levels
- The range of settings used for collective worship enhances children's opportunities to give thanks and praise for the natural world, as well as appreciating awe and wonder through church and cathedral worship

#### Areas to improve

- To ensure that all governors fully understand their responsibilities and strategic leadership role within a church school so that they are full partners in improving practice
- To formalise a monitoring and evaluation schedule for collective worship so that information about its impact can lead to ongoing improvements
- To develop children's awareness of diversity within the Christian faith so that differences in terms of practices of worship and beliefs are understood

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

'In this school, the four values are not just words, they are used as part of the daily life and work of the school' was the unanimous verdict of the group of parents interviewed. They could clearly see how each value was impacting on the behaviour of their children. For example, 'I'm waiting really nicely, showing patience.' Pupils are able to articulate confidently how each of the values supports and guides their personal development and achievement levels. 'I know that I must show courage and perseverance when my work is hard, so that I can improve my understanding'. They easily relate the values to Bible stories such as David and Goliath and the friends of the paralysed man in bringing him to Jesus to be healed. The summer term 'Values Day' is an excellent example of the whole school community exploring together what these values might look like in everyday life, from a 'caving' experience to understand courage, through to the production of a beautiful wall hanging to show patience and the contribution of each school member in putting together a collaborative piece of art work. The school, although pupil cohort numbers are small, has a rising trend of achievement, with pupils having special educational needs and disabilities and disadvantaged children being very well catered for. Attendance is good, with no exclusions due to the school's belief that every child is special and unique to God. Spiritual development is very well developed through classroom reflective areas and the hall worship table, where pupils are encouraged to spend time, when needed, to think and pray for particular concerns or events happening in their lives. Pupils' behaviour is good, encouraged and very well reinforced through leadership initiatives such as the 'Sports' Young Leaders', School Council and the school 'House Captains' scheme. Relationships within the school are very good, with two of the core values, love and patience, guiding social interactions between both adults and children. Parents praise the ethos of care and nurture within the school, 'From the moment that I walked in the door, I felt comfortable, cosy and safe. All the children are well cared for and supported, just like a close knit family'. Pupils are introduced to Christianity as a multi-cultural world faith through initiatives such as the 'Bishop's Harvest Appeal' and links with a family who are involved with mission work in Nepal. Their understanding of the diversity within the Christian faith is limited. RE makes a positive contribution to the Christian character of the school through links with values threaded through the RE curriculum and the strong emphasis on the teaching and modelling of Christianity as a vibrant and living faith.

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

Collective worship is given an appropriately high profile within the life of the school. It is recognised and appreciated by pupils, staff and parents as an important opportunity to join together to praise, pray and learn together. As one staff member said, 'My own personal journey as a Christian has been enhanced by working in a church school'. Worship opportunities are well planned, giving increasing opportunities for a group of children known as 'The Collective Worship Crew' to become involved with the planning and leading of worship. These opportunities have enabled the children to develop a clear understanding of the key purposes of worship in the lives of Christians. They are practised in writing prayers for a range of purposes. These are placed on the 'Prayer Tree' or included in school prayer book collections. There is a strong sense of awe and appreciation for God's creation of the natural world. This is enhanced, not only by the beautiful rural surroundings that the school is set in, but also by opportunities to worship outside. For example, the planting of the apple tree in the school grounds, so that as it grows and develops, so will the Christian vision and values being embedded within the school community. Opportunities to worship at least four times a year at Holy Trinity church for major festivals and the participation of pupils at cathedral services, such as the Harvest Festival, further widen pupils' experience of worship in different environments. Pupils have a developing sense of the Anglican liturgy through bidding prayers and the Lord's Prayer is used regularly within worship. Understanding of the Trinity amongst pupils is at a relatively early stage. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship has been carried out informally and there is evidence of improvements being made to practice as an outcome from this process. For example, 'Class Assemblies' have been replaced by 'Family Worship' which the parents have really appreciated, together with the efforts that the school has made to include them in knowing the hymns and prayers used in these worship sessions. Discussions about provision and quality of collective worship in school have not yet been undertaken with the whole governing body.

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

The clarity and aspirations for the school as a church school are modelled through the highly effective partnership of the headteacher and rector. This has enabled and encouraged discussions leading into practice that raises the quality of church school distinctiveness. The 'Values Day' held at the beginning of the year was extremely positive and productive in terms of revisiting the vision and direction for the school and valuing and giving prominence to its church school foundation. Stakeholders, including staff, governors and parents were able to give their views on the values to be selected and these are now proudly owned and demonstrated in practice across the school. In this school, all children are special and precious to the community and every effort is made to ensure that pupil achievements are as high as they can possibly be. This includes access to a very impressive range of extra-curricular activities, many led on a voluntary basis by staff members. School self-evaluation processes are thorough and accurate. These have been contributed to by governors, although the extent to which all governors, including newly appointed governors, understand their responsibilities in terms of leading strategically in a church school is less clear. School Development Plans focus narrowly on RE improvements, rather than the wider aspects included in the SIAMS framework. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the headteacher. They feel well known, welcomed and valued as partners in their child's learning journey. Staff speak in very positive tones about the impact of the headteacher within the life of the school in providing a clear vision and sense of future direction, based on the four core Christian values of love, patience, courage and faith. The links with the diocese have been considerably strengthened by the determination of the headteacher to access relevant diocesan training, networking opportunities and conferences, in addition to enabling visits to take place to St Albans' Cathedral. As leader of RE and collective worship, the headteacher has benefited considerably by close working with other leaders of small local church schools, sharing ideas and practice. Consequently, she has an excellent vision and plan for further improvements and enhancements to both aspects of the school's work.

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