



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Great and Little Shelford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street
Great Shelford
Cambridge
CB22 5EL

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: Ely

Local authority: Cambridgeshire

Dates of inspection: 03 February 2015

Date of last inspection: 22 March 2010

School's unique reference number: 110831

Headteacher: Alison Evans

Inspector's name and number: Judith Ruff 528

School context

The school is of average size with the majority of pupils from White British heritage. Since the previous inspection there have been significant building improvements by creating new reception class accommodation and a re-sited school entrance. A 'church school garden' has been developed by the whole school community. The school works in very effective partnership with three local churches, two Anglican and a Free Church. Two of these are a short walking distance from the school. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2015 to support the well-established headteacher, who has been in post for ten years.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Great and Little Shelford CE VA Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The outstanding example of a loving, nurturing Christian community within which children of all faiths and none are valued so that they understand the nature of God's care and concern for each one as a unique and special individual
- The high level of commitment of school leaders, including governors, to ensuring that the church foundation is central to the life and work of the school and that this is communicated diligently and effectively to the wider school community
- The strong and loving way in which the three churches work in harmony together, praying and being faithful witnesses and role models within the school
- The high quality enquiry based approach to RE, which encourages reflection and discussion of 'Big Questions' so that pupils are confident explorers of faith and belief

Areas to improve

- To share emerging good practice in assessment across the school, including developing

'next steps' marking so that pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work further

- To develop opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship from start to finish, so that they may grow in their understanding of the nature of worship and deepen their own levels of spirituality

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

In this school, the church foundation 'is infused into all the activities'. This statement encapsulates the deeply embedded Christian values that are promoted and modelled on a daily basis across the school community. As parents commented 'You see them when you come into the school, you can trip over them'. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being, understanding and spiritual growth. For example, awareness of Christianity as a multi-cultural faith is well developed through studies including the Diocesan link to Vellore in Southern India and by units on Christian festivals around the world. Pupils understand how privileged their lifestyle is and the importance of giving compassionately to others less fortunate. Very high levels of attainment and attendance are well articulated by the school community, linking them to values of diligence, patience and serving each other. This comes through very strongly in pupil interviews with exceptionally high levels of pupil responsibilities exercised across the school through reading and mentoring partnerships and the popular 'House system'. Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of the Bible and readily explain the meanings of Biblical texts and stories, linking them confidently to the school based values. As one child explained, 'Our values are the roots of the tree, with the 'Star Values' the trunk, the branches are the Christian framework for living and the fruits are those of the Spirit'. The project of designing and developing the 'church school garden' has provided valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality through discussions and debate. It provides a haven for peaceful reflection and prayer, together with a place to utilise all of the senses, so important for pupils' well-being and their sense of being at peace. Behaviour is of the highest standard, underpinned by a well thought through policy, which stresses forgiveness and reconciliation linked to taking responsibility for one's actions.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The impact and high profile that collective worship has on the whole school community is very apparent. Pupils' evaluations of worship include comments such as 'I can use collective worship as an opportunity to be calm and peaceful and to reflect on myself. The singing enables me to express my feelings and thoughts to people around me'. Pupils showed in their conversations that they understand the importance of what they have learned in worship to strengthen and uphold both Christians and others 'We need to love our enemies, even if they do bad things to you, because that is what God wants us to do'. 'We always leave worship with a big smile on our faces'. Governors take their monitoring role very seriously. They produce high quality reports, including insightful suggestions for further improvements. The impact of these can be seen in pupils reading Bible passages and the timetabling of staff so that they could attend worship. Pupils have not yet had opportunities to plan and lead acts of worship from start to finish. Staff value leading and participating in worship. Their contribution to worship has been further strengthened by Diocesan training. Prayer is very much at the heart of this school. Pupils understand the purposes of prayer, pray with sensitivity and earnestness for issues of concern. The local churches are diligent in their prayer life for the school. Pupils understand the concept of the Trinity and are proud of the fact that they incorporated a three tiered water fountain into their spiritual garden to remind them of the three persons of God. Collective worship is very well planned and thoughtfully led, enhanced by high quality singing and time to reflect on the chosen theme. All of the local churches are involved once a week through their clergy members in leading worship as well as the local GenR8 team, who visit regularly. A well supported lunchtime 'Bible Explorers' club offers opportunities for pupils to follow up their interest through stories and discussions. The local churches are very well used

for special occasions. The 'Candlemas' service held the previous day had a profound impact on both parents and pupils, enabling them to commend the way in which 'the Christian calendar overlays the seasonal calendar' providing consistency, reassurance and a pattern to the year.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Standards of attainment in RE are above national expectations for a significant number of pupils as evidenced through their oral contributions during lessons. There is less evidence to make a secure judgement on recorded work, although the inspection work scrutiny did reveal good levels of pupil responses to the knowledge and understanding part of their studies. A strength of the school is the high quality enquiry based approach, enabling pupils to feel confident about asking 'Big Questions' such as 'There must be something to create for anything to exist?' Pupils understand the purposes and importance of RE. 'It helps us in our lives. It is important to know about and respect other faiths. Some wars are about people's beliefs and faith'. 'It makes me think about life, how I act and my beliefs'. Christianity is taught very thoroughly and with confidence. Pupils' excellent levels of knowledge are further developed within collective worship. Their spiritual growth is promoted well through reflection and stilling exercises both in RE and collective worship. The depth of their knowledge and understanding of Christianity enables them to compare and contrast similarities and differences in the other world faiths covered with enjoyment and confidence. Teaching seen on the inspection day was outstanding in its creativity, rigour of planning and confident, enthusiastic staff who pass on their excitement for the subject to the pupils. Parents reported that their children go home excited by what they are learning in RE, questioning and wanting to carry out further research. The RE Subject Leader has followed advice from the Local Authority in developing formative and summative approaches to assessment. The emerging good practice in assessment amongst class teachers has yet to be shared fully across the school, along with the development of 'next steps' marking to guide pupils as to how work can be further improved. The numerous RE displays around the school are testament to the high profile and importance given to the subject. The subject leader is very knowledgeable and works collaboratively with staff to generate clear guidelines on the core beliefs of each religion. She has undertaken a work scrutiny and lesson observations in order to monitor outcomes. In addition, she has cascaded information from network meetings to staff and ensured that they are kept well up to date with the latest developments, particularly around assessment practice.

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

In this school leaders consistently and confidently articulate, live out and promote a vision rooted in distinctly Christian values. Right from the first point of enquiry, prospective parents are clear about what they are signing up to. Judging by the heavily oversubscribed nature of the school, parents join up happily and those of faith or none are equally appreciative of the nurturing and valuing approach to their child's education. The outstanding headteacher is trusted and respected by all within the community for her quality of leadership. Her expertise and experience is now being utilised in the role of 'Diocesan Consultant Leader'. The leadership of RE is outstanding, with the impact clearly visible in the dedication and thoroughness of the subject organisation and the enthusing and motivating of both staff and pupils to enjoy and be inspired by RE. The leader has contributed to RE working parties, helping to write units of work for the Diocese and collaborating on core knowledge in RE for the Local Authority. Governors are exceptionally able and knowledgeable, particularly around the distinctiveness of the school as a church school. They use their skills and understanding generously, enhanced by Diocesan training opportunities, to support the life and work of the school, prayerfully considering future developments, such as the induction of a newly appointed deputy headteacher into the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and is an established collaborative exercise, involving all stakeholders. Governors provide excellent strategic leadership to the school. They show good levels of care to the headteacher and the rest of the school community. Diocesan links are strong and much valued and have added significantly to the quality of work and witness of the school as an outstanding church school.

