



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mathews Close

Halstead

CO92BH

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Date of inspection: 3rd March 2016

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 115133

Headteacher Bridgette Gough

Inspector's name and number: Graham Lancaster 713

School context

This average sized primary school is one of three serving the community of Halstead. Pupils are predominantly of white British heritage. The percentage of pupils with additional needs and those entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with national averages. Since the previous denominational inspection the school experienced significant turbulence. A steep decline in outcomes was followed by a change in virtually all the teaching team, including the headteacher and deputy as well as in the majority of governors. The past two years have seen marked improvements, which have continued since OFSTED graded the school as good in 2015.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Andrew's Primary as a Church of England school are good

- The Christian ethos underpins school life and work. It is clearly evident in the physical environment and is highly valued by all stakeholders.
- School leaders have clarity of vision, drive and ambition for the school as a Church of England school.
- As a result of strong teaching pupils demonstrate significant strengths in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas to improve

- To review the school's stated values, linking them clearly with Christian belief and teaching, so that they reflect the school's Christian ethos more explicitly.
- To ensure that more able pupils are challenged within religious education (RE) lessons so that their knowledge and depth of understanding is developed to the full.

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

There is a clear emphasis on driving forward school improvement based on the school's underpinning Christian ethos. Consequently, St Andrew's school is effective in meeting its pupils'

needs. This is reflected in pupils' attainment and progress which show a continued upward trend and are at or above national averages. The high expectations of staff are reflected in the quality of pupils' work both in books and around the school. In keeping with the school's Christian and inclusive ethos attendance has improved to above the national average. There have been no permanent exclusions. It is a caring and welcoming school with a strong sense of community. A Christian visitor recently remarked on 'how much the Church is within these school walls'. The school's values of faith, love, respect, honesty and determination are clearly stated and expressed, especially through collective worship and during RE lessons. However, whilst supported by the school's implicit Christian ethos, they are not explicitly expressed or understood by all groups in explicitly Christian terms. School values are well used to address personal development and behaviour issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. This has been further enhanced through the recent 'philosophy for children' project which has equipped pupils well in expressing personal opinions and beliefs whilst respecting those of others. RE effectively contributes to pupils' understanding of diversity. The school has rightly identified the need to develop the spiritual dimension of the outside quiet area. Plans are well progressed to do this. A large number of pupils take advantage of opportunities for broader personal development through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of art in the school is striking and provides effective opportunities for pupils to explore spirituality. As one pupil reflected, 'this artwork is inspired by a spiritual journey and an adventure the path we take to getting closer to God and finding inner happiness.'

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The worship programme has a very high priority in school life and embeds the school's values and key areas of Christian belief and practice. It is led by a wide range of staff and visitors, including lay members of the church. Sessions led by the incumbent and Christian Youth Outreach, for example, challenge pupils and provoke discussions in school and at home. Pupils express age-appropriate understanding of Christian concepts such as sin and forgiveness, making right choices and choosing the right path. Pupils recognise that worship helps them reflect on important issues, often based on biblical stories and the life and teaching of Jesus. The programme provides relevant opportunities to explore the Christian concept of the Trinity, contributing effectively to pupils' understanding. Pupils enter the hall calmly, with a sense of expectation and reverence. They listen attentively and sing with enthusiasm, including the very youngest, indicative of worship which enables active participation by all. A focal point for worship is prominent. This effectively helps pupils' understanding of Anglican traditions such as, for example, the use of different coloured cloths reflecting different times of the Christian year. Saying an opening and closing sentence with responses is embedded into practice. Planning is comprehensive and ensures co-ordination between the varied leaders. Every opportunity is taken to underline the school's values. The pupils' collective worship group delivers whole school worship at least monthly, indicative of the productive involvement of pupils in worship. Pupils write their own prayers for worship. Governors, staff, pupils and parents are systematically involved in the evaluation process and feedback is acted upon. Space is limited for parental attendance in school but regular worship and services at the church are very well supported. Each class has a reflection area and there are many instances of pupils interacting with the prompts and questions provided. This is particularly strong in the shared area which is changed fortnightly in line with the worship theme.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

The significant strengths in teaching and learning which have been instrumental in improving outcomes in English and mathematics are also evident in RE. A wide range of imaginative strategies such as 'hot-seating' and using physical representations to engage pupils deeply in their learning is used. This helps pupils make good progress in RE. Pupils reflect well on what they are learning and relate it to everyday lives at school and beyond. As one pupil said, 'we used our philosophy ideas to unpick the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. It really helped me to understand the difference between what we need and what we want'. Pupils' written work is of a high quality. Pupils are consistently given opportunity to respond to teacher marking in order to improve their work. Subject leadership is effective in driving forward improvements. This includes support for developing teachers'

knowledge and confidence in teaching RE as well as effective monitoring and feedback of teaching and learning. Her detailed knowledge of RE across the school equips her to draw on strengths in one teacher to coach another who needs to develop this skill. Good progress is tracked closely using the school's assessment system. The percentage of pupils working at age related expectations in RE is broadly in line with national averages for English and mathematics. However, the attainment of higher ability pupils working at greater depth in RE is not always reflected in their subsequent assessments in all classes.

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

The leadership of the headteacher in raising standards and expectations since her appointment in 2013 is outstanding. Raising standards and strengthening the school's Christian ethos have been developed in parallel. There is a highly effective leadership team including the RE subject leader, the chair of governors and the recently appointed incumbent. They actively contribute their expertise and share the ambition for St Andrew's to be outstanding in all respects. As the chair of governors rightly comments, the Christian ethos is 'deeply rooted in school governance'. Areas for development from the previous denominational inspection have been successfully addressed. The importance placed on collective worship, including the quality and breadth of leadership, monitoring and evaluation have ensured that this is now outstanding. The school's self-assessment is comprehensive and accurate. Action planning is robust, with clearly delineated steps for improvement set against agreed priorities. External advice from the Diocese and others has been sought and acted upon. A comprehensive professional development programme results in staff being confident and effective in their teaching of RE. There is a clear commitment to identifying and training future church school leaders. Links with the parish church are strong as reflected clearly in the school's mission statement and evident across school life. This includes the incumbent being a much appreciated regular school visitor, providing support for RE as well as leading collective worship.

SIAMS report March 2016: St Andrew's CEVA Primary School, Halstead, CO9 2BH