



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Michael's Church of England VA Junior school

Barnard Road, Galleywood,
Chelmsford CM2 8RR

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 25th June 2015

Date of last inspection: 14th November 2012

School's unique reference number: 115197

Headteacher: Maria Rumsey

Inspector's name: Debbie Rogan

Quality Assurance: Lyn Field NS151

School context

St Michael's is a smaller than average junior school due to expand from September 2015. It has experienced many changes of staff in the last few years. The current head has been in post since April 2014 and a new deputy arrives in September. The school has a higher than average number of disadvantaged pupils including those in receipt of pupil premium and those who have special educational needs including with statements is higher than would be expected nationally.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Michael's junior school as a Church of England school are outstanding.

- The headteacher, who has been in place just a year, has had a huge impact on the nature of St. Michael's as a church school. She has strong personal values rooted in the Bible. Her impact on the school, in a very short time, has been transformational.
- Christian values are taught, explained, understood and used as models for living a good life and as a result pupils respect differences in their own and other faith communities.
- The behaviour and learning attitudes of pupils is of a very high standard resulting in the learning environment being calm and positive.
- The themes and content of collective worship raise the aspirations of all attendees and allow them to reflect and flourish spiritually.
- Standards in religious education (RE) are high because subject leadership is very strong. The vast majority of pupils, including vulnerable groups, reach age related expectations with nearly half meeting higher levels.

Areas to improve

- To develop effective induction systems for the number of new staff joining in September and thereafter so that the high quality provision particularly around RE and gospel values becomes fully embedded and supports succession planning in the school.
- To embed systems for monitoring spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) provision that includes all stakeholders so that leaders are clear of what needs to be improved and why.

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

St Michael's makes its gospel values clear and explicit. The school is filled with examples and illustrations of these. This includes the values cross on which every pupil has illustrated what these values mean to them. It also includes the mottos and Biblical passages that exemplify these values such as the Salvation Army's 'Fill me with hope' message, St Michael's Psalm and the links with other schools locally and globally which expand the children's understanding of community. This immersion in the values of the gospel has resulted in a calm, reflective, happy school and pupils who are achieving highly because their souls and minds are nurtured. Children at St. Michael's discuss the importance of truth, community, love and hope with maturity. The impact of these regular discussions and the ability of teachers to weave these into whole school gatherings such as assembly and lessons, means children and staff are constantly reminded of the model of Jesus' life as one to emulate. The school is highly inclusive because it values difference and understands its role as a Christian community in caring for the most vulnerable. Parents note this and feel it impacts very positively on their children's respect and awareness of others. Staff, children, governors and parents evaluate the pupils' behaviour as outstanding and it is, because the strong focus on the accepting and including of all results in a harmonious community with high aspirations for everyone. Provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is outstanding. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their spirituality in a variety of ways. The music offered in assembly supports the uplifting nature of the reflection. Visiting places of worship from other religions and using ICT and elements of design and art to display thoughts around Pentecost, all contribute to children's understanding and respect for other world religions. Parents note that children are now as excited about their learning in RE as in other curriculum areas. This excitement, engagement and enthusiasm was evident on the day of the inspection and has resulted in RE making an exemplary contribution to the Christian character of the school. The developing link with a school in Kenya has brought great benefits to the pupils' understanding of the global Christian community and the sharing of crowns with pupils there which were made by pupils at St. Michael's was discussed with pride and joy by the pupils.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

The staff, pupils, parents and governors take pride in the quality of collective worship and a wide variety of people take part in delivering and planning it. This includes children. It is evident that children are used to this and confident in preparing all aspects. There are regular liturgical routines which are embedded and the use of music to lift participants spiritually is a strength of the provision. One parent commented how the singing at assembly 'had given her goose bumps'. The use of the assembly box using artefacts to demonstrate God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit supports pupils' understanding of the Trinity and how God is present in many different ways in their lives.

Participants share great joy and pride in celebrating their achievements during this time and individuals and groups show genuine pleasure at the skills and progress of others. Spontaneous applause for the saxophone player when demonstrating gifts and talents in the arts exemplified this. This shared pride in achievement has a very positive impact on the aspirations of the pupils as well as their personal development. The incumbent is highly involved in the delivery and planning of collective worship. It is well thought out and organised for the year with the headteacher. The inclusion of scriptures to exemplify values and themes supports children in understanding how God helps them live their lives as does the variety of people delivering the same consistent messages.

Children understand the nature of the church year and how this impacts on what goes on in school and church. As a result pupils feel a sense of stability, expectation and wonder. Prayer has a high profile. This can be seen in the confidence with which pupils write their own prayers often spontaneously and individually on the prayer net as well as collectively in class to share with parents in assembly or in the school's publication of prayers in the school newsletter. The headteacher collects feedback from participants in collective worship and governors also monitor using specially designed forms from training that they have undertaken. This has resulted in constant improvements to the quality of collective worship over time.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

The subject leader has thorough and up to date subject knowledge and has worked very hard to develop her role further by attending training and sharing this new knowledge with staff. The RE leader has read and researched national reports on best practice and is ambitious for her subject and her pupils' attainment. She monitors learning, teaching and books regularly. The inclusion of RE learning in writing books alongside other curriculum work has supported the raising of attainment in writing, as basic skills' targets can be followed up relentlessly and rigorously. Pupils achieve highly in RE and can articulate their views and thoughts about a range of religions including identifying key similarities and differences. This is because the teaching is of a very high quality and RE is rightly prioritised. Evidence in pupils' books and the new marking and feedback policy shows pupils being encouraged to think further than the work completed in class. For example questions such as 'in what sense?' result in pupils thinking further about what they are learning. Regular assessment shows that pupils are making good progress including those from disadvantaged groups. These pupils are often some of the highest achievers in RE. Children are encouraged to use a range of stimuli to learn about religions, including art and Biblical writings. Parents and pupils note how they enjoy RE and during lessons they listen carefully to their teacher and talk confidently about what they are doing and learning. The subject leader's monitoring judges teaching to be outstanding and teaching seen during the inspection matches this judgement. Children showed enthusiasm and interest in the subject matter of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians and what it teaches us about community and unity. They shared delight and enjoyment in discussing the creative ways they were presenting the stories of Pentecost. The quality of questioning in lessons as well as the way religious stimuli is used as a reinforcement of the school's values contributes to a powerful environment in which to develop pupils' social and personal development. The consequent links with the pupils' own lives as well as the choices that they make result in pupils being able to apply their learning to more abstract representation of the subject matter in poetry and art.

Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about other religions including Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Non-teaching and teaching staff note the positive impact this has on the behaviour and respect pupils have for each other and for people beyond the school community. They believe that this acceptance of, and respect for, diversity is key to peace in communities. This is why the school is such a calm and harmonious community.

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

The headteacher has had a remarkable impact on the school in a very short period of time. She has refocused the energies of staff, governors and pupils on examining the distinctive nature of a church school. This has resulted in all stakeholders sharing and explicitly articulating core values based on Biblical teaching. This, in turn, has had a positive impact on the whole school community including relationships and the academic attainment of pupils. The strong partnerships including those with the local church and a Kenyan school strengthen this further. In 2014 pupils achieved well below average in numbers of children who reached age related expectations in reading, writing and Maths. In 2015 the school predicts outcomes to be higher than national expectations. This rapid progress has resulted from a strong Christian ethos based on Christian principles and beliefs, and a rigorous self-evaluation process which has led to improved teaching and learning behaviours of pupils. The school recognizes the need to begin to capture some of this improvement more formally and in particular the impact on the social, moral, spiritual and cultural outcomes of pupils. Governors, some of whom have been associated with the school for a long time, are committed to the ongoing development and see the 'inward and outward' vision as essential to the further strengthening of the school. This desire to further collaborate and learn from others as well as sharing St. Michael's good practice with others is essential for the continued success of the school. They feel that 'God is at the centre of all we do' and say that tough decisions are made with compassion. They hold the core values of the school at the heart of their work. They are aware of the need to embed strong induction systems for new staff to ensure succession planning for the school is strong.