

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Catherine's Church of England [VC] Primary School

Park Road,

Ware,

Hertfordshire

SG12 0AW

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Dates of inspection: 18 June 2015

Date of last inspection: 24 May 2010

School's unique reference number: 117410

Head teacher: Hazel Wing

Inspector's name and number: Mel Adams NS 58

School context

Since the previous inspection, the head teacher, deputy head and have Religious Education leader have been appointed. Following these appointments, there has been an increase in pupil numbers, and a building project to develop the school into 2 forms of entry. The Ofsted report from June 2014 judged the school to be good. Attainment is above national average. There has been an increase in casual admissions at key stage 2. The number of children with special educational needs is around national average and those entitled to free school meals is below national average.

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

- The strong leadership of the head teacher has led to improvement in the Christian character of the school, expressed through clear values which steer relationships and behaviour enabling children to access their learning.
- The Christian ethos supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural [SMSC] development and children's knowledge and understanding of faith.

Areas to improve

- Governors and school leaders should develop a shared understanding of the school's values from a distinctively Christian perspective and articulate this so that it is understood by the school and wider communities.
- Improve the experience of daily worship by developing understanding of Anglican tradition and practice, including the importance of the Holy Trinity in Christian worship.

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

Governors, school leaders, staff, parents and children have a clear understanding that St. Catherine's is a school with a Christian foundation. They recognise that the values which the school promotes give children an understanding and respect for Christianity and other faiths. Children are confident to speak about their own faith with others, and they are clear that the respect which they learn about in collective worship and RE helps them to do this. The values are shared human values, often linked to Bible stories. At the heart of the school's commitment is the desire for every child, whatever their needs, to 'flourish personally and academically', steered by their values. As a result behaviour is good with children able to take responsibility for their own learning, working collaboratively and supporting each other leading to good attainment and progress. There is not yet a shared understanding of what makes the values Christian. Those for whom attendance and behaviour is challenging are supported to be able to access learning. There is no doubt that the values impact on the lives of children and in the way that staff demonstrate this commitment to every child. One parent of a younger child described how impressed they were when their child spoke of the sharing and caring which was promoted and actively demonstrated in their class. Over the past 2 years the school has demonstrated a commitment to SMSC development through staff training and focus weeks on spirituality and an international month which have supported children's growing understanding. Through RE and collective worship children have a good understanding of different faiths and they are able to reflect on different perspectives, and in some cases how these affect their own and other peoples' lives. Children understand that the school is a church school linked with the local church.

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

Children appreciate and understand the importance of collective worship, one child describing how it helped them to think 'where God might be'. They describe how the Bible stories they hear can have a moral, helping them to be better people, raising their aspirations by helping them to think about what to do in their day to day lives. They are very aware of the values they learn about in assembly and how they apply these to managing their friendships where caring and forgiveness are seen as of great importance. Children also speak of the importance of having respect for different religions and cultures. Children participate with dignity and respect, during times of prayer and reflection. There is an awareness of the church year through celebrating festivals, and they know prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. Prayer extends beyond the act of worship, with a central prayer tree, and a values tree where children add their prayers. Classroom reflection areas are well used and provide further opportunities. One parent described how her child regularly writes prayers at home. Compilations of children's prayers for special events such as the anniversary of VE day give them opportunity to reflect on the spiritual significance of their learning about important events. Through these experiences, the children are able to describe the school as a Christian school but they do not associate this with Anglican tradition and practice. Daily worship is planned around themes such as patience and koinonia, using a variety of resources such as children's fiction, biographies of inspirational people and Bible stories to explore values and how they can be used in day to day living. There is a commitment to affirming those children in school who have a different faiths, as observed in the inspection where the head teacher skilfully linked the experience of Ramadan to the schools values. Children were then able to explain how these values make them 'better people'. There is some understanding of the person of Jesus, and how his life and ministry inspire their values, along with an awareness of God. They do not have a clear understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children participate through writing and reading prayers. School 'worship warriors' have evaluated the class reflection areas and also help to lead worship. The head teacher, supported by staff, plans for collective worship which she leads along with other staff and the vicar. Other members of the church, including a long serving governor, support the school and lead worship. There is no involvement from those from other Christian traditions.

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

Since the previous inspection there have been changes to leadership at all levels including the head teacher, deputy head and RE leader. They have successfully built on aspects of the last inspection, including some of the areas for development. This includes developing a deeper understanding of different cultures and faiths which children are able to speak about. They use their knowledge to speak about similarities and differences, and explain how this helps them to have respect for different faiths and cultures. The vision, articulated in the school development plan states that, 'we inspire everyone to achieve, enjoy learning and care for each other, building on Christian values of forgiveness, respect and honesty'. Children are able to sum this up in their motto, 'ACE', achieving, caring and enjoying. School leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of the school's performance. The deep commitment of leaders, including governors, to meeting the needs of those who are vulnerable is seen in the way that staff work together to support learning and behaviour which enables children to sustain good progress and build relationships. Governors have developed their strategic leadership through discussion of the church school self-evaluation document and related development plans. They are committed to the Christian foundation of the school and recognise how developments over recent years have improved collective worship and RE and embedded values as part of school life. There is not a clear shared understanding of these values as Christian values. Visiting governors along with staff informally discuss the children's responses in worship, and children have had the opportunity to speak about what it means to them. These informal evaluations are used to plan for following acts of worship. The RE leader has been supported to develop her role and staff training has improved learning in RE by developing teacher knowledge. Leaders have also supported the developing ethos of the school and parents recognise that staff are modelling the values in their relationships with children. The partnership between the school and church is good, with a long-serving governor, and other church members contributing to support of the school. The vicar visits the school monthly to help to lead worship, and also leads visits to the church to support spiritual development. The head teacher's commitment to supporting 'the whole child, spiritually, morally, socially culturally and physically in an environment where they feel loved and safe' drives forward the developing Christian ethos. As a result of the development of understanding amongst leaders and all staff, there is capacity to ensure that developments are sustainable.

SIAMS report June 2015, St Catherine's Ware, SG12 0AW