



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Dewhurst St Mary Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Churchgate, Cheshunt, Waltham Cross EN8 9ND

Diocese: St Albans

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

This inspection grade: Good

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 12 February 2015

Date of last inspection: March 2011

School's unique reference number: 117415

Headteacher: Susan Wilcox

Inspector's name and number: Mel Adams NS 58

School context

Dewhurst St Mary is a one form entry urban primary school with 194 children on role. The proportion of pupils thought to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as are the percentage of those with special educational needs. Pupil mobility is also above average. At the time of the previous inspection, the church had a newly appointed rector. Since that inspection a new head teacher has been appointed.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Dewhurst St Mary as a Church of England school are good

- The strong leadership of the head teacher and rector, supported by the governing body and staff, has led to rapid improvements in the Christian character of the school, which in turn has created a strong learning environment and rising standards throughout the school.
- The governors and staff are fully committed to the development of the Christian character and to working together to ensure that this continues to drive school improvement.
- There is a strong link between experiences in collective worship and the application of Christian values by adults and children in day to day school life.

Areas to improve

- To embed the Christian character of the school by systematically monitoring, evaluating and planning alongside the school improvement cycle.
- For school leaders to agree a shared understanding of spirituality as a Church school in order to further develop personal spirituality
- To provide further opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [SMSC] through planning across the curriculum, including in Religious Education.

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

Described as 'a thread running through the school', Christian values, predominantly faith, hope and love, are evident in the day to day life of the school. Staff, parents and children recognise how these have supported the development of the ethos and consequently the experiences of those who work and learn in the school. One child spoke of how what they hear in assembly 'makes me warm inside and helps me learn'. One of the youngest children explained, 'Jesus helps you do good things, he won't stop being your friend if you get things wrong'. Parents speak of the school as a 'values' school which 'teaches how to love'. They are appreciative of the way children apply values in school and at home with one parent describing being reminded by their child that they too should use them. Standards in the school have risen with the majority of children making and exceeding expected progress. In keeping with the school's desire to support every child, all groups of children are making similar progress to their peers. Attendance, just below national average, is attributed to a small percentage of persistent absentees who in keeping with the schools commitment to pastoral care, are being supported to improve attendance. The head teacher describes how Christian values drive raising the aspirations of every child to fulfil their potential. There are some examples of SMSC development through interactive displays asking 'big' questions. In one display a question based on the story of the prodigal son asking, 'Can you think of a time when you found something difficult?' This prompted a child to respond by describing trying to learn multiplication tables and never giving up. Spirituality has been discussed by governors and school leaders, however, there is not a shared interpretation across the school community. Opportunities are not fully used for spiritual development across the curriculum and particularly in RE. Children have some understanding that there are a number of world faiths including Christianity. Relationships throughout the school between adults and children are strongly informed by their values, such as using the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation in managing behaviour. As a result children are developing integrity, are safe to make and learn from mistakes, and learn well through understanding the importance of Christian values for their own day to day life in school and beyond.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Since the previous inspection the rector and head teacher have identified clear Christian values linked to the Bible. These are displayed in the hall and in all classrooms and children are able to identify their importance as they worship and learn. One child described how after looking at them in assembly he sometimes goes back to his learning believing that he can learn well. The majority of staff attend, and one described how, through the values, they had grown in faith themselves. Referring to the parable of the prodigal son, a child was able to identify how he believed this helped a friend to show how much he cared for someone who was hurt. A governor described how the daily assembly has become a genuine act of worship. The extent to which this is becoming embedded was observed in the inspection where following an exciting class presentation of a recent visit to St Albans Abbey, all children participated with reverence and respect in the prayers which followed. Children have a clear understanding of God the Father and Jesus the Son. Although some children are aware of the Holy Spirit their understanding is limited. There is a growing understanding of Anglican practice through celebration of festivals, most recently Candlemas, along with other aspects of the church calendar. The school attends church for some of these services and an increasing number of parents also attend. Prayer is an important part of daily life in school, extending the ethos of worship into the school day. Reflection areas in classrooms enable children to write prayers which are shared either in assembly or at church. The school council has led the development of a shared spiritual area. Children describe the purpose of this being to give them space for prayer and reflection for themselves and others. Worship is reviewed by staff and through regular meetings between the rector and the head teacher, but it is not evaluated systematically as a part of the school's development cycle. All children attend worship, which is made accessible to those of different faiths and none through the practical demonstration of

values which are understood and appreciated by all. Children participate by reading prayers and passages from the bible and the school is in the early stages of supporting children to lead acts of worship.

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

Following the previous inspection, the then newly appointed rector led the development of the vision for the school as a church school. Leading with passion and deeply held belief the head teacher, working with the rector, has since enabled staff and governors to work together to develop the Christian character of the school. Diocesan training has supported leaders in these developments. As a result, most of the areas for development from the previous inspection have been addressed. There has been a notable rise in standards along with improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. Governors and staff recognise that the development of the Christian character has had a direct impact on these developments which the rector describes as transformational. Although school evaluation for the inspection is accurate and well informed and areas for development accurately focussed, systematic church school evaluation is not part of the school's evaluation cycle. SMSC is developing and is celebrated well in some interactive displays. Although there is some evidence in children's books, this is not consistent across the curriculum including religious education. The leadership of collective worship, now steered by the agreed Christian values, is recognised and fully appreciated by members of the school community. They see this as strategic in the development of the Christian character of the school and speak of the impact on the daily experiences of staff and children. Learning is further enriched by a number of volunteers who support in different classes. Through the rector and head teacher modelling leadership of collective worship other staff are now beginning to lead. Children have a growing understanding of the needs of others locally and globally through supporting charities.

SIAMS report [12TH February 2015] [Dewhurst St Mary Cheshunt] [EN8 9ND]