



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Catherine's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Haslewood Avenue
Hoddesdon
EN11 8HT

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 21 March 2016

Date of last inspection: February 2012

School's unique reference number: 133773

Headteachers: Mandy Staiano and Ange Wallis

Inspector's name and number: Lizzie McWhirter 244

School context

St Catherine's School is a larger than average primary school in the heart of Hoddesdon's town centre. Most of its 330 pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who receive pupil premium funding is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The joint acting headteachers were appointed as substantive joint headteachers in February 2012. The parish is currently in an interregnum, but a new vicar has recently been appointed.

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

- This is a nurturing family community, underpinned by Christian values. This ensures everyone feels welcomed and accepted.
- There is a renewed impetus from dedicated leaders, staff and governors who are working hard to ensure the school's Christian character permeates all school life.
- The supportive Christian environment enables positive attitudes amongst its pupils to life and learning. As a result, they become confident individuals and are well prepared for life.

Areas to improve

- For the governors to put in place a religious education[RE] policy which ensures that the subject makes a strong contribution to the school's Christian distinctiveness.

- Deepen pupils' knowledge of the saints, such as Catherine and Paul, as well as pupils' age-appropriate understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This strengthens church /school links and enhances their understanding of Christianity as a worldwide faith.
- Embed the programme of visits and visitors to enable pupils to meet people of faith more frequently and support their spiritual and cultural development.

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

St Catherine's is a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing Christian family where the wellbeing of the whole community is of utmost importance. Every member of staff firmly believes in each child and their aspirations to achieve to the best of their ability. This takes place in a context where there are no barriers and high expectations. This is because the school's Christian vision is 'Aim High in Life, in Learning with God – Together' and is rooted in Christian values, such as hope and compassion. This underpins the school's belief that an understanding and appreciation of Christian values can be applied to all aspects of school life; and that through these values, children can progress and achieve. Such values are modelled by adults and encouraged in pupils, so the whole community can articulate them and understand their implications in daily life. Consequently, staff expect the children to achieve and the children in turn enjoy achieving within a supportive Christian environment. The school attributes this to the cohesive nature of the staff and the supportive way in which they work together, asking the right questions. In addition, permanent staff have been recruited to enable pupils to benefit from depth in learning. This includes training for staff, team teaching and specific interventions. As a result, 'children have found their love of learning again'. All children are valued as God's children so staff are sensitive to the needs of all children, with counselling and play therapy provided where necessary. Attendance shows an improving picture. This is because attendance surgeries focus on persistent absences and demonstrate the Christian values of hope and compassion in action. These clinics very much focus on how the school can support any parents who might be struggling in getting their child to school for any reason. The school works closely with families and relationships are therefore good. Any misbehaviour is addressed by children writing meaningful letters of apology, with a focus on not breaking any of the golden rules which reflect Jesus' teaching on a forgiving community. When there have been any exclusions, children are positively welcomed back to school with a fresh start, employing forgiveness. Pupils say, 'with Christians, they usually spread The Word and help others to know there is someone there to help'. Pupils have a voice through the school council and collective worship team. As a result, charity fundraising is a strength of this church school. Good examples include messages hidden in German enabling them to explore the significance of the Second World War and Remembrance-tide. Pupils enjoy RE and their knowledge of Christianity and Judaism is good. Pupils can explain the Christmas and Easter narratives very well, speaking of the symbolism of bread and wine Jesus instituted at The Last Supper. Older pupils consider the events of Holy Week and ask important questions, such as 'giving coins back to Caesar and how the praying place became a market'. However, pupils say they welcome learning more about Christianity as a worldwide faith. Pupils enjoy learning from each other. Good examples include a Year 4 Muslim pupil sharing the importance of 'his clothing and his holy book'. In addition, his father came into school to explain the importance of celebrating Eid at the end of Ramadan. However, pupils say they 'would like to go to the mosque and learn more about people of faith'. The school acknowledges that extending the programme of visits and visitors in RE is an area for development to help enrich pupils' experience of different cultures and beliefs.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective worship rooted in Christian values and biblical teaching nurtures pupils' spiritual growth. As a result, pupils say, 'when we're being compassionate, we are not self-centred in any way and you put your heart in other people's feelings'. Since October, a number of Year 5 pupils have been recruited to become members of the popular collective worship team. They love to sing and take part in drama. Whilst this group is still in its infancy, already pupils have planned and led the Christmas service, with the intention for this to grow and include more pupils. This enriches their experience of becoming independent worshippers as well as developing their leadership roles. Pupils say they would like to 'do more leading and be involved more' in worship. One worship team member significantly went on to say, 'more people should join and I've believed in God more'. Membership of the worship team enables pupils to grow spiritually. As one pupil put it, 'when I joined the

collective worship group, I didn't know much about God and Jesus. In a while I know a bit more'. Evaluations from staff and pupils are gathered each week to inform future planning. Key festivals are celebrated at the parish church of St Catherine and St Paul, strengthening the links between church and school. These include Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The Ash Wednesday service takes place in school. The Crib and Candle festival and the Christmas plays always take place in church, which are well attended and much enjoyed by pupils, parents and the church community alike. The church is now much more aware of making the links reciprocal. Good examples include the children inviting their parents and serving breakfast before the 9 am Mothers' Day service in church. The oldest lady in the parish congregation remembers the school in her prayers. Pupils currently receive a blessing at the services of holy communion. However, the school is looking to develop the understanding of the Lord's Prayer, Holy Communion and The Trinity with their newly appointed vicar. In addition, the school acknowledges the need to deepen pupils' understanding of the saints, especially St Catherine and St Paul, to whom their parish church is dedicated. Pupils say they welcome this. With regard to The Trinity the school is very early on in this journey. Currently the school uses a three-wicked candle in worship. Pupils are growing in their understanding of The Trinity, explaining, 'God is three things; he's the Holy Spirit, the Son of God and a miracle worker. In the garden Jesus prayed to God the Father, does it have to end this way?' The words of hymns such as, 'In Christ Alone' are explained to pupils to teach about the Christian faith. Prayer is important in school. Good examples include one of the teaching assistants who works closely with the collective worship team, helping them write a signed lunchtime prayer. This grace has been in place for one month, 'reminding us to be thankful and loving and caring'. Prayer and reflection is encouraged in class and also outdoors, where a memorial garden is used to nurture pupils' spiritual development.

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

The Christian vision to learn from God, and the dedication of the headteachers in conjunction with the staff and governors, ensures that the distinctive Christian character of the school is proudly proclaimed. The senior leadership team have had an important impact on the learning which takes place and the school's distinctive Christian character. As a result, the school's outlook has broadened and the school is much more reflective of its important links with the church. Whilst many governors are new in post, they are all committed to ensuring that each person, whether adult or child, flourishes in this environment. As befits the Christian character of a church school, St Catherine's is welcoming and inclusive of all, encouraging the pupils to respect and follow biblical teaching. The leaders and governors firmly believe in Jesus' teaching to love your neighbour and that 'no matter what skin colour, gender, race or sexual orientation, every child is valued in their own right'. There are no formal cases of homophobia or other kinds of bullying; the school attributes this to the restorative, not punishing, measures which are employed. As a result, any child, whatever their family background, feels included and part of this Christian family community. Consequently, children succeed and achieve well. There is a renewed impetus to move the school forward. The school now enjoys a full complement of governors. They acknowledge, 'all aspects of the school's Christian ethos are woven into the fabric of what we do as governors'. Good examples include the importance of prayer at all governors' meetings before important decision making. All areas from the previous inspection have been addressed. The school's leaders and managers acknowledge this school is on a journey, but really value the difference it can make to this community. With a new link governor for collective worship since May and a new RE subject leader since September, governor monitoring is a work in progress. Staff and governors have benefitted from diocesan training and support which have sharpened their focus and evaluation of the school's distinctive Christian character and its impact. Good examples include that church school self-evaluation is now a standing item on the full governing body agenda as is the introduction and development of the collective worship team. The underpinning, nurturing support from the senior leadership team is recognised. The RE subject leader sees her role 'as very important, not just a job'. She is given time to attend courses and conferences as well as carry out book scrutinies and learning walks in school and contribute to the action plan. As a result, the RE policy is being reviewed. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. Governors correctly acknowledge that embedding the regular monitoring of RE is key to informing the distinctive Christian character of the school. They are also keen to involve parents and a parent partnership award is supported by one of the governors. Good examples include curriculum evenings to explain the Christian values to parents and how being the parent of a child in a church school makes a difference. Parents value the caring, nurturing environment provided for their children. They feel they are well informed as partners in their children's education. They praise the pastoral care for every individual child. Community links are good, such as Remembrance-tide commemorations. Good examples include pupils 'selling poppy wristbands every year. On 11th of 11th we sit in silence for two minutes and remember the soldiers'. During the

interregnum, the school has been well supported by the lay reader. He has talked to the children about what it means to be a Christian. Parents speak highly of church services, such as the Easter service when the lay reader washed the hands of the chair of governors, acknowledging some pupils are visual learners. They also praise the bereavement support in school, citing the choir soloist who had recently been bereaved. They go on to say how their children teach their siblings the songs and sign the actions in the lunchtime prayer at home. Some parents work closely with the church, saying, 'working together, that's what we like!' They welcome the new vicar whose youngest children will attend St Catherine's saying, 'it keeps that tie between church and school'.

SIAMS report March 2016 St Catherine's CE VC Primary School, Hoddesdon EN11 8HT