



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Peter and St Paul Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Buckhurst Road
Bexhill on Sea
TN40 1QE

Previous SIAMS grade: Good

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: East Sussex

Dates of inspection: 9 February 2016

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2010

School's unique reference number: 114564

Headteacher: Angela Hamill

Inspector's name and number: Connie Hughes 765

School context

St Peter and St Paul's is an urban primary school with 413 pupils on roll. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2013. The majority of pupils come from the immediate vicinity of the school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, supported by pupil premium funding, is slightly above the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is well below the national average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average but is growing, with an increasing number of faith groups seeking places at the school. There are strong links with five Anglican foundation churches and other Christian denominations in the town.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Peter and St Paul as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The explicit Christian vision significantly impacts on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners who, portraying themselves as enquiring, reflective and co-operative, share how their learning in religious education (RE) and worship informs their own opinions, beliefs and actions.
- Collective Worship is inclusive, inspirational and engaging, offering learners a rich spiritual experience.
- Learners understand, respect and celebrate diversity within an inclusive Christian faith foundation.
- Strong leadership effectively monitors, supports and promotes the school Christian ethos, ensuring all pupils engage in high quality experiences, which influence outstanding achievement, behaviour and attitudes.

Areas to improve

- Extend the content and use of the designated prayer spaces in each classroom through more interactive reflection and worship on Christian themes.

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

The school is led by an outstanding senior leadership team, whose commitment to maintaining the Christian ethos permeates the whole educational experience. Pupils, staff, governors and clergy are fully engaged in securing an inclusive environment, whose mission “Learn, Love, Live in the Light of the Lord” establishes this school as ‘a loving and supportive Christian family’. The stimulating and eye-catching displays on entry and throughout the school explicitly reflect the school’s core Christian and human values, which underpin the daily life of the school community. High expectations and aspirations set by staff impact on pupils’ outstanding attitudes to learning, excellent standards of achievement and exemplary behaviour. Standards of attainment are significantly above national expectations, with all pupils, including the most vulnerable, achieving high levels of success.

The ‘Curriculum Big Picture’ comprehensively addresses the importance of ‘Christian values and the love of God at the heart of our teaching and learning’. Exciting cross-curricular themes, RE and collective worship provide a breadth of rich learning experiences, impacting significantly on pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The increasing number of faith groups within the school community enables the pupils to learn and respect first-hand the range of beliefs and cultures in our diverse world. A breadth of information on the school website and parent and parish newsletters embraces the school’s Christian foundation and activities in the community. Parents are overwhelming in praising their choice of a church school, ‘the Christian ethos visually impacts on children’s self-esteem, achievement of life-long skills and sense of belonging’. Pupils are purposeful, practical and caring, applying Christian values in response to the needs of the local, national and global community. Guided by the well-organised School Council the pupils are proactive in a two-way process of sharing their faith and culture, whilst providing resources for their link school in Africa.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Inclusive, inspirational and engaging worship offers all pupils and staff an outstanding rich spiritual experience of the Christian faith. Led by the senior leaders, staff, clergy and pupils, daily collective worship is celebrated as a central part of school life. Through structured, well-resourced and creative themes incorporating Anglican tradition, symbols, biblical teaching, music and drama, pupils have a good knowledge of the church year and how gospel values impact on their own life. Worship, explained the pupils, ‘is where our hall becomes our church’, and ‘we are learning to live our lives in the image of Jesus Christ’.

Observing worship led by the School Chaplain, pupils, staff and governors were completely focussed and actively involved. Incorporating biblical teaching and technology, images of paintings reflecting the temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness, pupils were stimulated, reflective and engaged in understanding the season of Lent and how to ‘turn away from wrong doing and follow Jesus’. Music and well taught songs chosen to enhance worship, enable pupils to respond appropriately with quiet, personal reflection, singing with skill and enjoyment a range of traditional and more modern hymns. Prayers, written by pupils and from the school prayer tree, used in the observed worship, contained sensitive and shared thoughts, reflecting the values of love, faith and hope impacting on pupils’ spiritual growth in their daily life. All faith groups participate in school worship, with daily provision made for Muslim pupils to pray, respecting their culture. Wednesday morning school worship is effectively planned, organised and led by pupils, and is increasingly well attended by parents and families. The Lord’s Prayer, ‘grace’ at lunchtime, Anglican liturgical responses, including the Trinity, are established practices and an integral part of children’s spiritual experiences in school and at home. Established links with five Anglican church communities, including regular attendance to celebrate major festivals and Eucharistic Services three times a year, bring the school community together. The school participates annually in the town’s Remembrance Day service, Year 6 diocesan and St Peter and St Paul’s school Leavers’ Services. The governors’ Ethos and Worship Committee have embedded effective monitoring and evaluation structures, enabling all pupils and adults to share thoughts and ideas and fulfil planned improvements.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

RE standards of attainment are in line with national expectations and comparable to other core subjects. Teaching and learning is consistently good to outstanding across the year groups. Diocesan and staff led professional development cascaded throughout the school has strengthened teachers' subject knowledge, lesson planning and inclusive classroom practice, securing skills based teaching strategies to enable pupils to learn exceptionally well. Assessment strategies effectively incorporate national and diocesan guidance on 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion'.

The RE subject leadership team have produced a curriculum that is relevant, engaging and creative, enabling pupils to explore and understand Christianity as a major world faith whilst experiencing knowledge of different world religions and traditions. Teachers expertly set the scene, enabling all pupils to embrace spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through for example, Godly Play in the Reception class, and understanding Jesus as a healer and the significance of The Lord's Prayer across Key Stage 1 and 2. Inspiring learning outcomes were evident as Year 1 pupils fully engaged in a learning dialogue with Year 4 and 5 Muslim pupils who confidently explained the importance, practice and ritual of Muslim prayer. Questioning included the Year 1 pupils identifying similarities in the sound of the Christian 'amen' and the Muslim 'ammin' in the culmination of both faith prayers. An RE week focussing on first-hand experience to explore similarities and differences between Christian denominations and world faiths within the local community produced outstanding learning, comprehensively evidenced through high quality displays, pupil questionnaires and enthusiastic responses. Structured and rigorous leadership team monitoring through lesson observations, governor visit reports and work and marking scrutiny identifies pupils as enthusiastic and skilled learners, making good to outstanding progress in RE. Although classroom prayer spaces are well used they are not consistently focused on providing interactive reflection on Christian themes.

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

The headteacher's and deputy headteacher's commitment and success in securing the school's Christian distinctiveness is outstanding. Their excellent knowledge, motivational skills and pastoral leadership are a significant factor in securing pupils' SMSC development and guidance on what is right and wrong. A most memorable moment came, when a child proudly sharing a class RE celebration book, explained the importance of the Christian value of 'love', 'we live as we love, and we love as we live.' Working collaboratively with governors the faith foundation of the school is well-embedded in the daily life of the school. The Ethos and Worship Committee, comprising equally of staff and governors, consistently and effectively contribute to a cycle of self-evaluation and school development strategies, sustaining the school's Christian vision to a high standard. School documentation reflects how well the academic achievement, well-being and SMSC development of all pupils is closely monitored. All staff are excellent role models, committed to ensuring that 'enrichment and expanding knowledge is the key to learning' and that 'children can't learn if they are not supported and cared for'. Relationships across the school community are strong. Parents talk confidently of the consistent and effective two-way communication between the school and home, ensuring the highest standard of care, safe-keeping and well-being for their children within 'a loving and Christian family'. The governing body staff appointment process promotes an explicit Christian ethos, strongly supporting church school leadership professional development. Partnerships between the Local Authority, Chichester Diocese, Christian churches and local schools are strong, exchanging appropriate leadership and curriculum development. The Rector of St Peter's Church, as the school Chaplain, sensitively provides for the spiritual and pastoral well-being of the school community. On leaving school, pupils in Year 6 are presented with the gift of a holding cross, reminding them Christ is always with them. The statutory requirements for RE and collective worship are met.