



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

St Nicholas Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 3LP

Previous SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Current inspection grade: Good

Diocese: Chichester

Local authority: Brighton and Hove

Dates of inspection: 20 October 2015

Date of last inspection: 16 October 2009

School's unique reference number: 114543

Headteacher: Linda Dupret

Inspector's name and number: Connie Hughes 765

School context

St Paul's CE Primary is an average-sized school situated in the heart of Brighton. There are currently 235 pupils on roll and it offers 25 part-time places in its Nursery. The school serves a wide catchment area with a mix of pupils from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds. The school has 37 pupils for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average. It is closely linked to three churches, its adjacent parish church of St Nicholas, and the benefice of St Paul's and St Michael's.

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

- The school's Christian ethos makes an important contribution to the strong community relationships, enabling all pupils to feel secure, happy and valued.
- The school motto "Foundations for the Future" underpins the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) experiences of pupils, preparing them to become responsible citizens.
- Collective worship (CW) in church services develops pupils understanding of Christianity, and application of Anglican tradition and practices.
- Religious education (RE) contributes to pupils' exploration and understanding of the Bible, Christianity and other world faith beliefs and practices.

Areas to improve

- Improve pupil ownership of collective worship through greater involvement in its planning and evaluation.
- Raise the quality of religious education teaching by consistently providing activities pitched at the right level to challenge pupils of different abilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of governing body monitoring by establishing rigorous evaluation strategies to secure evidence of the impact of St Paul's as a church school.

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

The school's Christian vision and values emphasise the importance of the partnership between the church, home and school from the Nursery through to Year 6. Relationships between parents, staff and pupils are extremely positive and productive, embracing the care and well-being of all learners. Explicit teaching of British values, aligned with an understanding of Christian values, make a strong impact on the classroom environment and the school's overlying ethos. The importance of following Jesus' commandment, 'to love your neighbour', stated by the pupils, clearly shapes the daily life of the school. Spiritual and moral values resonate in pupils' good attendance, responsive attitudes to learning and their excellent behaviour, referred to by a parent 'as hugely influential in reaching out to other children' and 'having a strong sense of what is right and wrong'. The Special Educational Needs Forum, led by senior staff for Key Stage 2 parents and carers, 'is tangible evidence of togetherness between home and school', explained a parent. Current Key Stage 2 data indicates that standards in writing and reading require sustained improvement to enable pupils to make expected progress and achieve national averages.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding, enabling all pupils to make a positive contribution to the local, national and global society to which they belong. For example, the current 'Contain a School' project with the Fontwell Trust, reflects pupils' acute awareness and exceptional generosity in providing vital equipment and resources for their established link church school in Uganda. St Paul's, through teacher and pupil exchanges and daily interactive learning of Spanish, were recently reaccredited with its International Award. Christian symbols, personal Bibles, classroom reflection areas and focused displays in the hall, including the impact of famous people on world peace initiatives, give the children a rich spiritual experience. Partnership projects with the Deanery schools, entitled 'Fruits of the Spirit' and 'Parables of Jesus', supported by RE and CW motivated pupils experience and application of Christian values. Pupils explained how they are encouraged to show care and concern for others: 'to be kind, helpful and generous,' said a Year 6 pupil.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Pupils have a clear understanding that acts of worship are special times in the school day. A recent pupil questionnaire reported worship was a time to 'gather together and worship God'. Younger pupils stated, 'worship was important because it gives us time to think'. Worship is planned in themes, incorporating Christian values and the cycle of the Church's year, by the headteacher and the Worship and Ethos Committee. Pupils were attentive and responsive to headteacher led school worship, comparing the physical similarities and differences of three pupils with the same Christian name, with an emphasis placed on 'each one is unique in God's eyes'. Through worship and RE pupils develop an understanding of the centrality of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the Christian faith. The teachings of Jesus Christ and His important place in Christian worship were clearly articulated when talking to the older pupils. Established links with the three local church communities, including regular attendance to celebrate the major Church festivals, brings the school community together. School leaders, teachers and pupils fully participate in clergy led church services, school Masses and the Eucharist. Pupil involvement in these services is traditionally Year 6. There is less involvement in planning worship from other year groups. Increasing numbers of Year 5/6 choose to attend confirmation classes, culminating in a visit to Chichester Cathedral and a sleepover in the school every year which is seen 'as both fun and spiritual'. When questioned, pupils explained how they use stillness, silence and reflection to focus on prayer in worship and in response to local and world events. Although all pupils knew The Lord's Prayer, studied in detail in Year 5, they stated it was most often used in church services. In response to observed practices and pupils' views, a stronger focus on Anglican symbolism and practices is needed during school worship. CW is not outstanding because the governors' Worship and Ethos Committee has yet to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation process, including the level of pupils' involvement and spiritual experiences, to gather evidence that contributes to areas for future improvement.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good.

The RE curriculum is primarily Christianity, including major events in the Anglican Church year together with an emphasis on other major world religions. The curriculum is enhanced through significant and distinctive SMSC experiences. Effective subject leader portfolios and annual lesson monitoring identify that progression in learning and standards of achievement are in line with age related expectations. Good pupil progress was evident across Year 2 and Year 3 when inspection lesson observations took place. Scrutiny of Key Stage 1 and 2 RE books, planning records and lesson observations identified too much emphasis on photocopied sheets and a lack of activities to support or challenge all pupils' learning experiences. Assessment and marking strategies to support all pupils' engagement and progression in RE learning are not fully developed in challenging pupils to improve their work. The school is addressing assessment strategies in all subjects as a school priority. Pupils in Year 2, studying Jesus' parable of The Good Samaritan, were encouraged to explore the range of feelings and emotions of the story. Although experienced in the use of talk partners, when applying the Christian values of love, friendship and compassion to the lives of their friends and neighbours, the quality of responses was dependent on pupils' abilities. Year 3 pupils, asking the question 'What is God like?' were actively engaged in discussing and recording their perceived emotional reactions of God to photographs of a range of social and cultural events in our world. Key Stage 2 pupils spoke knowledgeably of the Bible 'as the key to the Christian faith' and as a reminder of following Jesus in 'how we live our lives'. RE displays, for example, reflect Year 5 pupils' engagement in their learning and spiritual response to challenging questions: 'I discover God by going to a quiet place and praying...I even sing along to hymns to try to communicate with God'. Visits to Chichester Cathedral, local churches and the support of local clergy enhance all pupils' exploration and understanding of Christian fellowship and Anglican tradition. A range of pupils RE work is displayed in all churches as outreach to the wider community. Pupils confidently explore and compare the beliefs and teaching of world faith traditions through planned themes and visits to a Mosque, Hindu temple and Synagogue. Continuing professional development to extend staff knowledge, skills and the effective delivery of RE, is primarily through partnership projects with Deanery schools. RE is not yet outstanding because teaching does not consistently provide activities pitched at the right level to challenge pupils of different abilities.

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

The senior leadership team are proactive in maintaining its church school ethos, emphasizing 'caring and nurturing threads through the school,' in its strong partnership with parents and carers. The leadership ensure that school improvement priorities include aspects relating to church school distinctiveness. These priorities are being acted upon and lead to an explicit communication of Christian values, a more creative RE curriculum and a raising of standards in pupil achievement. The Ethos and Worship Committee are committed to the ongoing development of the school as a church school. The overall leadership and management as a church school is not yet outstanding because following recent changes to the structure of this committee, it has yet to gather high quality evidence to monitor effectively the impact of the school's Christian distinctiveness.

The clergy have a strong presence in the school, supporting CW and RE provision and school leaders are looking forward to the imminent arrival of a new vicar. The headteacher's leadership strengths include active involvement in embedding and sustaining the school's Christian distinctiveness within the local church community, diocesan and Deanery schools' projects and international links. Discussion with some parents and carers identified the need for a more explicit celebration of the school's distinctively Christian values as they found it difficult to relate their children's experiences and success to the school's Christian foundation. All parents, emphasise the co-operation between the school and home, "there is a strong community feeling inside and outside the school". The school meets the statutory requirements for RE and CW.