



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

Long Marston Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Station Road Long Marston Tring HP23 4QS

Diocese: St Albans

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Date of inspection: 19 May 2014

Date of last inspection: April 2009

School's unique reference number: 117459

Headteacher: Clare South

Inspector's name and number: Alan Thornsby NSIN 137

School context

The school is a smaller than average primary school and serves a wide area that includes the surrounding villages and the town of Tring. The majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils supported through pupil premium and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well below average. There have been staffing changes during the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Long Marston as a Church of England school are good

- The vision and drive of the headteacher, staff and governors develop a purposeful Christian learning environment
- The impact of Christian values and the high personal expectations of staff and governors that result in good academic and personal development of children
- The input of the vicar and links with the church extend the worshipping experiences of pupils

Areas to improve

- Extend the spiritual awareness of pupils through greater involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of worship
- Further staff knowledge of higher level thinking skills in order to provide greater challenge and to continue to raise attainment in religious education
- Provide training and discussion opportunities for new foundation governors to explore the distinctive nature of a church school to enable them to fulfil their statutory role

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

The school has a welcoming and caring ethos that reflects Christian love in action in its daily life. This results in excellent relationships throughout the whole school community. Adults, committed to providing the best learning opportunities, support and challenge each individual. All groups make good progress and above national level attainment is currently on an upward trend. The school has effective strategies to ensure there is continuing progress across all areas. Pupils have positive attitudes, enjoy learning and confidently explain 'we learn about Jesus and try to be like him.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school as a result of identified opportunities in the broad curriculum and range of out of school activities. The high profile of religious education (RE) and worship enhance the distinctive Christian character of the school and enable pupils to relate Christian values to everyday life. This is reinforced in displays of crosses, designed and made by children, prayers and 'big questions' such as 'Why do innocent people suffer?' and 'Who made God?'. Older pupils take responsibility for younger pupils as part of a buddy system. Children have a good understanding of Christianity as a world faith and knowledge of other faiths through whole school topics such as Judaism, as well as 'Diversity week.' The children are vociferous in their belief that 'You can't judge a book by its cover'. Opportunities to explore a range of charities and their backgrounds enable children to make informed choices of who and how to support.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Worship is a key part of the Christian character of the school. Effective planning, based on the diocesan liturgical themes embeds and relates explicit Christian values and Bible teaching to everyday life. For example, the vicar compared maps and a sat-nav to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus as sources of finding the right direction. This provides an opportunity for pupils to consider their actions and promotes an understanding of how to make informed choices because of their impact on others. The developments from the previous inspection have been securely addressed. The profile of worship has been raised through weekly visits by the vicar and use of church for festival and end of term services. 'Sing-alongs' involved the church, pupils and parents in informal celebration and worship at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The range of worship formats during the week enables age appropriate exploration of themes. These have also increased pupils' understanding of prayer, the Trinity and life of Jesus. Children understand the use of a lighted candle and liturgical colours that reflect the colours on the stole and altar. Pupils understand the time of prayer as 'a time to talk to God'. Their understanding is being deepened by the use of an innovative range of prayer introduced by the vicar, including a prayer string that joins everyone together in prayer. Although children make regular contributions to worship, through suggesting or performing music, sharing prayers and ideas, and are involved in informal evaluation of worship, they do not have sufficient opportunity to plan and deliver worship. Current monitoring and evaluation of the impact of worship involves the headteacher, staff and pupils. Newly appointed foundation governors are being supported in their role and involvement in measuring the impact of worship.

The effectiveness of the religious education is good

Religious education has a high profile in the distinctive Christian character of the school. The conscientious subject leader has developed a new syllabus to meet the needs of the school. She ensures staff possess the knowledge and confidence to deliver effective lessons. There is a programme of regular monitoring, lesson observation, work scrutiny and assessment. Senior leaders evaluate these to inform an annual focus review that is part of the school development plan. It has, for example, identified the need for teachers to challenge pupils to make greater use of higher level thinking skills and continue to raise attainment. Currently attainment is judged to be in line with the high standards in other subjects but it is recognised that some pupils even make better progress because of opportunities to use verbal and reflective skills.

Lessons are good because of lively pace, effective questioning skills and use of reflection. Children are engaged and enjoy the range of stimulus that includes drama and music. Religious art, including some original works by Paul Forsey, is effectively used. Children have a developing knowledge of religious vocabulary. When studying other faiths the whole school studies the same topic and there is clear progression and development across the age range. For example younger children explored and retold the story of Jonah and created music to represent the storm. Older children discussed the importance and reasons for forgiveness and reconciliation developed from the story. Teachers make on going informal assessment to ensure that learning objectives are being met and modify or revisit aspects of work accordingly. Children recognise the differences between learning about and learning from religion as this is reinforced in tasks and book titles. Recorded work shows a range of differentiated tasks, with marking comments that often indicate the next stages of learning. Learning targets in the front of books show progress and are used by older children for self-assessment.

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

The school has a vision, jointly created by the whole school community, that links high expectations, challenge and a love of learning. It is securely rooted in the Christian values that drive the daily lives and routines of the school. Staff understand the implication of working in a church school because of diocesan training. This is reinforced by regular half termly discussion exploring aspects of church school distinctiveness. Staff are supported in curriculum and personal development training and several have experience of training as future leaders of a church school. Staff and governors understand the links between the distinctive Christian character of the school, Christian values and the school development plan. Governors are well informed and support school development, because of a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development. A regular parents survey indicates the effectiveness of how well this is communicated. A range of self-evaluation procedures and reviews in RE, worship and of the Christian character of the school inform the school development plan. These are clearly related to the current inspection schedule and indicate a good potential for future development. A number of foundation governors are newly appointed and are gaining the skills and knowledge to fulfil their role. They recognise the need for further training and the school has, for example, identified the need for a more active role in monitoring the impact of worship. Parents are proud of the school and its impact on their children, commenting 'this school gives them the knowledge to make informed choices.' They have a secure understanding of the distinctive nature of the school as a church school, supported by surveys and weekly newsletters that refer to Christian values. They recognise the input and encouragement of the vicar that supports the decision making of children and their confidence to find their own answers and belief. The school, with the church, is an integral part of the local community and is part of the local school consortium.

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