



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

### Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

New Church Road  
West Bergholt  
Colchester,  
Essex  
CO6 3JF

**Diocese: Chelmsford**

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Date of last inspection: 30th March 2009

School's unique reference number: 115083

Headteacher: Neil Matthews

Inspector's name and number: Rosemary Morgan 64

### School context

Heathlands Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a large, oversubscribed primary school serving the village of West Bergholt and surrounding areas. The majority of pupils are white British with a very small number from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average while those supported through action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. The number of pupils supported through pupil premium is below average. The school has close links with the nearby St Mary's Church.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Heathlands Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong sense of belonging and ownership which is founded on a commitment to and a thorough understanding of the school's aims and values
- The caring Christian ethos of the school in which all are valued, enabling pupils to develop to their full potential
- The powerful sense of 'team', generated by the excellent, imaginative and receptive leadership of the Headteacher, which is communicated to great effect by pupils and adults alike

### Areas to improve

- To further promote the Christian foundation of the school by including more aspects of the Anglican tradition in worship so that pupils may make more links between worship in Church and in school
- To embed the Church school improvement and action plan to ensure that this becomes part of the on-going cycle of development and improvement.

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

A welcoming, supportive and caring Christian family community has been created through the dedication and commitment of all staff and governors. The internal school environment is attractive and promotes reflection and the school's Christian character, enabling learners to interact, wonder and reflect meaningfully about their faith and their feelings. In this way the visual environment also gives excellent support to pupils' spiritual development. The stained glass entrance surround, designed by pupils, now gives immediate prominence to the school's Christian foundation. Pupils and staff subscribe to an ethos underlined by the school's core values of friendship, respect, thankfulness, truthfulness and hope. As a result attendance rates are high, behaviour is good, exclusion rates are low and pupil achievement high. Dedicated team work at all levels ensures commitment to continuous improvement with the agreed 'non-negotiables' for quality teaching evidenced in RE as well as core subjects. Adults and children work together in successful partnership and this is demonstrated by the strong links between school, Church and the local community. A good example of this is the implementation of the 'Beloved Primary' (Christian Youth Project) led by a parent governor who is also a Church member and generated in response to Year 6 pupils' concerns about transition to secondary school.

School council members have a mature understanding of their roles and responsibilities as members and to the wider community. They have presented plans to governors and input their thoughts and ideas for projects such as the creation of the outdoor learning area and fund-raising for the Tom Bowdidge Foundation. Pupils live out the school's values in their everyday lives whether in their roles as playleaders, buddies for the year two/three transition or in their visits to the nearby Bluebells Pre-school. The school's multi-cultural links and pupils' global awareness are now strongly enhanced by such projects as the diocesan Kenya partnership and the communication with schools in Slovakia and South Africa as part of the work with the International Schools Award. Religious Education (RE) complimented by an imaginative PHSE programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learners demonstrate a very good level of religious literacy when discussing their work, often linking this to the school's values. Pupils can discuss the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity highlighting the need to respect others' perspectives.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good.**

Collective worship is perceived by pupils, staff and parents as centrally important to the life of the school. A programme of worship themes has been compiled by the senior leadership team and Church representatives. It incorporates Bible stories and festivals from the Anglican calendar as well as the regular focus on the individual school values. The 'Values for Life' resources have been incorporated into worship plans. Worship is led by the senior team members, Church representatives and pupils. School house led worship is valued by pupils, one pupil referring to a Bible theme and the need to have trust in God in times of trouble. Staff attend worship regularly, appreciating the opportunity for affirmation described by one staff member as 'my quiet time'. The value themes such as 'Trust' are explored in worship sessions, for example pupils were asked to consider with a partner 'A time when I had to trust myself', these thoughts to be shared and discussed later in class sessions. Through a variety of creative approaches, the school is enabling pupils to develop their understanding of prayer. Thinking candles are a focus within daily worship and pupils see this as a symbol for prayer and reflection, a school council member explaining, 'When I pray I feel safe'. Pupils contribute prayers to a central 'Prayer Tree' as well as to class prayer books. Family services and Christian festivals such as Harvest, Ash Wednesday and Easter are celebrated in the 'new' St Mary's Church and pupils enjoy the opportunity to contribute with their own prayers and songs of worship. The inclusion of more aspects of the Anglican tradition in school-led worship (such as the use of familiar Anglican responses) would enable pupils to link more firmly to their experiences in Church. Year six pupils are keen to welcome the new incumbent, viewing this as an opportunity to further engage in planning and delivering worship 'together as a team'.

Pupils display a developing understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit but this could be expanded further. Pupils make connections with the stories they hear and their wider implications

referring to a theme of 'Change' and relating this both to junior and secondary school transfer. The worship is monitored and evaluated by governors as well as by the senior team; perceptions are also gathered from staff and pupils and as a result worship now includes more opportunity for pupil interaction. Pupils would nevertheless welcome further occasions for participation in the evaluation of worship, for example by identifying criteria for a 'successful assembly' and monitoring subsequent impact.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear vision rooted in Christian values, which is communicated with great effect to all groups. Staff, pupils, parents and governors are united in their mission and purpose; the sense of Christian community is powerful. Children and adults are proud of their school and the way in which Gospel values are lived out in daily life, a child referring to the importance of respect saying, 'You have to give it, to get it'. Staff feel appreciated, their contributions welcomed and valued. There is a clear ownership of the school's vision statement; the values embedded in practice manifest themselves in all aspects of school life. Governors are active in their role, contributing to the annual identification of school improvement priorities and providing a balance of challenge and support. Great consideration has been given to succession planning and the school is well equipped to maintain its commitment to continuous improvement when the current head takes up a new post. Links with the diocese have strengthened since the last inspection and the review by senior school leaders of the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) self-evaluation document provides a clear and accurate assessment of the school and its future priorities. A well-considered Church school improvement and action plan has been compiled to ensure that the school continues its mission to maintain and nurture its distinctiveness. The partnership with parents is exceptional; an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) works tirelessly to fund raise and support school life, recognising its role in promoting school values. The senior leadership team and staff are acknowledged to be approachable and understanding. Parents' views are sought regularly and they feel proud to be part of the school. An example of this is the portfolio of school life which provides a very special record of events linked to the values and to the school's and Parent Teacher Association's (PTA's) mission statements.

The newly appointed RE and Collective Worship manager is well placed to maintain and develop the coordination of these areas; she has clear plans for future improvement priorities and is supported in her role by the senior leadership team and the direction of a strong action plan.

SIAMS report July 2014 Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School CO6  
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