



National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

London Road
Bowers Gifford
SS13 2DU

Previous SIAMS grade: Satisfactory

Current inspection grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Chelmsford

Local authority: Essex

Dates of inspection: 18 November 2015

Date of last inspection: 11 November 2000

School's unique reference number: 115150

Headteacher: Emma Wigmore

Inspector's name and number: Graham Lancaster 713

School context

St Margaret's is a one form entry primary school which serves a local community on the outskirts of Basildon. The proportions of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities are all above the national average. There have been significant changes in school staff since the previous inspection. The school had a Section 5 OFSTED inspection in January 2015 and was graded 'Good' in all respects, which indicates a marked improvement from the previous judgement.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Margaret's Primary as a Church of England school are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership has led to significant improvement in the overall effectiveness of the school and to Christian values permeating every aspect of school life.
- Every individual within the school community is highly valued. Opportunities are actively created for pupils and staff to develop their leadership skills and qualities within a spirit of 'koinonia' (community).
- Worship is central to the school's Christian life. It engages, challenges, inspires and supports all who take part.
- Creative and highly effective religious education (RE) produces enthusiastic responses from pupils and empowers them to explore Christian values in a broad context.

Areas to improve

- To create more overt links between the school's Christian values and aims.
- To continue to improve opportunities for pupils to engage in high quality experiences which support their spiritual development.

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

The school's website states that the school is: 'driven by our strong Christian valuesand these values guide everything we do'. Parents, school leaders, staff and, most of all, pupils, manifestly demonstrate this. As the Church warden expressed it, they are, 'rooted in the fabric of the school'. Significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in outcomes being above the national averages in virtually all measures. There is an explicit commitment to the development and progress of every pupil, including the most vulnerable. This has been achieved through a clear focus on the school's five Christian values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding. Evidence of this can be seen, for example, in pupil responses to 'I wonder' boxes on post-its and in reflection books and in the provocative questions in shared areas such as, 'What is the difference between being smart and being wise?' Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Attendance is in line with the national average and the school is effectively supporting those whose attendance is not as it should be. RE and the collective worship programme supports the school's Christian ethos exceptionally well. Through RE pupils appreciate the importance of understanding other faiths and respecting people with different beliefs. Those without a personal Christian faith are confident to participate in class discussions. A wide range of opportunities are provided for pupils to take on additional responsibilities. Parents report that they can see the development of leadership qualities in their children. Pupils have an active role in identifying and planning the school's charitable giving. This is frequently linked to events within the school community such as a pupil having treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

There is a sense of excitement and expectation as pupils and staff enter the hall for worship. They spontaneously joining in with songs which are being played. Pupils are accustomed to a variety of formal Christian affirmations which reflect the distinctive Anglican tradition. The Anglican liturgical colours are used across the focal point for worship. Excellent use is made of strategies such as talk partners, and pupils of all ages are very enthusiastic to answer questions. The pupil prayer group is actively involved in leading worship, including lighting the candle to signify worship has begun and saying the welcome. They demonstrate confidence and careful preparation in all aspects of the worship they lead. Adults and pupils sing with infectious joy in the lively songs and with reverence and a sense of the presence of God in those which are more reflective. During worship, the school's core values are continually reinforced. This positively influences pupils' attitudes and behaviour and their SMSC development at the highest level. The incumbent leads worship regularly. Pupils report these occasions as very special and love the songs he teaches them. Parents appreciate the way in which he makes his messages accessible for all and say that they leave a lasting impression. He and the pupil prayer group contribute to the planning and evaluation of worship. They are in the process of producing their own range of prayers in line with the school's worship plan. Pupils bring in prayers from home to share in class worship. Age appropriate prayer/reflection areas in each classroom are well used and enhance pupils' opportunities for and understanding of prayer.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

As the result of teaching which is consistently good, and often outstanding, standards have risen steadily. A significant proportion of pupils exceed national expectations. Well-established

pupil tracking systems ensure that high expectations are maintained for all. There is a three year upward trend in attainment in RE, with challenging but realistic targets set for further improvement. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is closing in Key Stage 1 and has been reversed in Key Stage 2. Teaching is underpinned by the diocesan scheme of work and is supported by highly effective subject leadership. Equal monitoring opportunities are provided for English, mathematics and RE subject leaders, reinforcing RE's status as a 'core subject'. Every teacher has a professional learning log which includes critical feedback from the subject leader. This is followed up in their next evaluation. Teachers use imaginative and creative approaches and a wide range of teaching strategies with the result that pupils are completely engaged. Detailed differentiated planning and effective deployment of additional adults ensures that all pupils are fully engaged in learning from the outset of lessons. In the classroom and in discussions pupils demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. They are keen to show their work in RE and take a real pride in it. Pupils collaborate very well, sharing their ideas and thoughts with confidence and trust in one another. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in pupils' application of their learning in RE to their own lives. Teachers are confident in tackling challenging concepts such as Jesus as the Word in Year 6, and how God is light and Jesus is the light of the world in Year 2. Marking refers directly to the focus of the learning and often includes an additional challenge.

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

Following a challenging period for the school the headteacher has built a highly effective team of staff who share her clear vision and aspirations for the school. They share her commitment to providing a rich, engaging learning experience for every pupil within a distinctively Christian context. Leaders manifestly believe and live out the school's Christian values. Staff and pupils respond positively to the expectation that these values are for everyone to live out within the school community and beyond. Opportunities for investing in the training and development of leaders within the school staff have increased the scope for delegation. This is demonstrably the case in RE. The RE subject leader has excellent subject knowledge and evaluative skills. She has drawn on advice and training provided by the Diocese as well as attending national conferences. The school hosts a local RE subject leader hub within which there is active sharing of best practice between schools. Improvements in the overall effectiveness of RE have been achieved in conjunction with steps to enhance the school's Christian character. The areas for development identified in the previous denominational inspection have been successfully addressed. There is an ambitious plan for further improvements based on rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. The incumbent makes a significant contribution to the spiritual life of the school. This includes leading worship and working closely with headteacher to build a significant partnership between the Church and the school. Since the previous denominational inspection there have been considerable changes in school governance. The chair is a consultant from the Diocese of Chelmsford and membership also includes a headteacher with experience of leading a church school. Both are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the progress being made. Their expertise has contributed to the significant improvements the school has made. Parents enjoy attending worship and the termly Eucharist is particularly well supported. One parent recently strongly recommended the school to a new neighbour explicitly because of its strong Christian values.