



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

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

### Christ Church First School

Northesk Street, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8EP

#### Diocese: Lichfield

Local authority: Staffordshire

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Date of last inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

School's unique reference number: 124293

Headteacher: Mr Neale Chester

Inspector's name and number: Helen Gilbert 633

#### School context

Christ Church CofE (VC) First School is a small school in Stone with 137 pupils on roll. There is significant pupil mobility and the current Year 2 cohort has seen a 20% change since the end of Reception. The head teacher has been in post since Easter 2014, following the illness and then the retirement of the previous long-standing head. The majority of the parents have chosen the school because of its reputation as a caring and inclusive church school.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christ Church as a Church of England school are good

Christian values are strongly embedded and underpin all the work of the school. Pupils can relate these values to their everyday lives. Prayer and worship have a central place in the daily lives of pupils who value their special relationship with the church. Relationships between all members of the school community are strong and supportive and governors have a clear vision for their school as a church school.

#### Established Strengths

- Christian values have a strong influence on the confidence, attitudes, behaviour and relationships of pupils.
- The school's commitment to inclusion ensures that all pupils are nurtured and cared for.
- Governors and clergy provide very good support and understand the school's strengths and areas for development.

#### Areas to improve

- Strengthen the teaching of stories from the Bible.
- Enhance pupil's spiritual development through the creation of an outdoor area for quiet reflection.
- Involve staff, clergy and foundation governors in systematically evaluating the impact of

worship for pupils.

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

School leaders, governors and pupils all articulate the distinctive Christian values that underpin the life and work of the school. These values have a consistent impact on the confidence, attitudes and behaviour of pupils of all ages. Pupils feel safe and know that they can readily approach staff if they have a problem. They can explain the importance of love, trust, perseverance, generosity, forgiveness and hope. Pupils say that teaching about forgiveness helps them to quickly resolve relationship issues and they do not believe that bullying is an issue in the school. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work and staff members demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the needs of pupils in all areas of their development. This is reflected in pupils making good and in some cases very good progress. Parents understand that the school is a church school and speak about choosing it for the care and support it gives pupils. They value the moral compass the school gives to children and recognise the impact this has on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Some parents spoke about the importance of their children learning about Christian values, traditions and major celebrations. A number of parents had transferred their children from other schools and these parents and children all spoke of the positive difference they found at Christ Church. The clergy team help to shape the distinctive Christian character of the school. The partnership with the church is very strong and pupils feel very comfortable in church. They describe it as *'a place where we can have fun.'* They understand that the school and the church have a special partnership and say *'this means we learn about God and Jesus.'* As a result a number of children attend the weekly children's club and holiday clubs in church. Pupils can talk in an age-appropriate way about the importance of prayer and worship in their daily life in school. They can explain the significance of the prayer tree in the entrance hall although some thought this could be used more frequently as part of their worship. Some pupils find it more difficult to recall what they have learned as part of religious education although older pupils are able to talk about the value of learning about Islam alongside Christianity. Pupils from other faiths say that they feel valued and can identify with much of the teaching of Christianity. They enjoy fundraising as part of demonstrating generosity but demonstrate only a limited understanding of how their efforts support local or global charities.

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

Pupils value worship and see it as a cornerstone in the life of the school. They are able to talk about the values that worship addresses. These are relevant and support the personal and moral development of pupils who can link them to their daily lives and relationships. They enjoy both whole school and classroom worship each week. These two settings provide different opportunities for engagement and response and pupils experience opportunities for prayer and reflection in both formal and more informal situations. Two acts of classroom worship were observed during the inspection. Both were age-appropriate, linked to the whole school worship theme of hope and contained references to Bible stories. Younger children were quiet and respectful. They listened well and were responsive, joining in with corporate prayers. Older pupils responded thoughtfully when challenged to reflect on what Jesus taught about hope and to consider issues of social justice for children based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each classroom has its own worship area although pupils make more use of prayer boxes in some classrooms than others. With some prompting pupils are able to talk about the different aspects of prayer and most believe that *'God sometimes answers our prayers'*. Clergy are committed to leading worship each week and the pupils speak about their visits with great enthusiasm. Since the last inspection the previous head teacher, worship co-ordinator and clergy have evaluated worship and this has informed policy and provision. They have ensured that in addition to covering key themes, worship also introduces pupils to the key celebrations of the Christian year and to aspects of Anglican tradition and practice. Pupils

display a good understanding of these. Worship regularly includes teaching about the person of Jesus and children can explain why he is 'special'. Bible stories are regularly included in worship but many children's recall of these is confused. This is an area for development. There is evidence of key elements of Christian worship and pupils have a simple understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The school has set up a small worship group to begin to give pupils more ownership of worship and they are able to talk about their own ideas for the future. These include enlarging the group and 'training' other children themselves as well as developing more areas for quiet reflection.

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

A strong Christian vision has underpinned the leadership and management of the school over many years and as a result Christian values are now deeply embedded. The new head teacher places great value on this Christian foundation and has a strong commitment to working with the local church and the diocese to ensure that it is maintained in the future. The school has systematically addressed issues from the previous inspection and both the actions and their impact are well documented in the school's self evaluation. Senior staff, governors and clergy have provided strong and safe hands during the recent period of transition. This is affirmed by the recent OFSTED Inspection report. However, they are not complacent and understand what is necessary to improve outcomes for pupils further. Governors articulate their vision for 'the feel of a village school within a town' and 'a school that is knitted into the fabric of the community.' They have demonstrated a clear vision for succession planning and have sought to appoint a head teacher who will move the school forwards whilst honouring and building on all that has gone before. Whilst they value the strengths of the school, they are aware of areas for development and have introduced a robust action plan for target setting in partnership with external advisors. The co-ordinator for religious education and worship also holds a realistic view of areas to be addressed. These include more systematic teaching of Bible stories and embedding the evaluation of the impact of worship within the annual cycle for monitoring and review. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. Some are able to develop their own leadership as members of the school council and took an active role in interviewing candidates for the position of head teacher. The newly formed worship group offers opportunity for three pupils to engage in developing worship. This now needs to be developed to involve more pupils across the school.

SIAMS report July 2014 Christ Church CofE (VC) First School, Stone, ST15 8EP